

CHARLIE WILSON'S
PROPHECY

Lorryburn

United Free Church

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To

Walter Beattie

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Musical chairs.

Charlie Wilson's Prophecy

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CHAPTER I.

THE YOUNG PROPHET.

"Fearless he sees, who is with virtue crowned,
The tempest rage, and hears the thunder sound;
Ever the same, let fortune smile or frown."
GRANVILLE.

THERE was mud everywhere; mud in the roads, bespattering the horses and covering every vehicle as it hurried along; mud on the footpaths, thin and watery where there was much traffic, thick and greasy where the traffic was not so great; mud on every passenger, for it was impossible to avoid it, however light might be the tread; mud on the shop windows, and on the very doors of the houses having no gardens to protect them. Even inside the houses there was mud, for, scrape as much as you could, it was not possible to leave all the mud on the scraper. Rub, rub, rub, till the doormat showed signs of wear, still the mud would find its

way into the very bedrooms. There seemed no way of escape from this unpleasant intruder—the horror of the housewife, and the dismay of the one whose duty it was to clean the boots.

Nevertheless there was great business being done in the streets of the thriving little town of Graystoke. A hurrying crowd pressed along, some with deep earnestness on their faces, others with signs of sorrow and disgust.

It was Christmas Eve, and on every hand were signs of preparation for the enjoyment of the coming festival. The shopkeepers praised their wares in loud tones, the stalls were ablaze with naphtha lamps, and a great hum of voices filled the air, causing the most indifferent passer-by to take some little interest in the active scene moving around him.

Among those who pushed their way through the busy crowd of buyers and sellers was a lad, just now fourteen years of age. He paid little attention to what was passing in shop or at stall; his solemn face showed the deep earnestness of the purpose he had in hand.

Thin, tall, without muscular strength, Charlie Wilson possessed a boldness of spirit most unusual at his age, and quite incomprehensible to the young people with whom he associated.

Charlie was on a mission he thoroughly hated—his soul revolted against the work he had in hand—but it was a necessity, and he bowed to it with an

obedient will. It was a duty, and he determined to go through it with patience.

Along the busy High Street, past the enticing shops, without even a glance at the tastefully-arrayed windows, out into the darkness he went, along a path with a field on either hand, till he came to a big building, looking more ugly than ever in the gloom, its big chimney belching forth flames and illuminating the sky with its glare.

Charlie took his stand near a fence, a spot from which he could easily observe who came out of the factory, but where it would not be easy for others to see him. He buttoned his coat around him, and determined to brave the cold wind which now blew across the fields and from the river near at hand.

The clock of the neighbouring church struck seven. It was the hour when the factory men left business; it was the hour when he had to endeavour to carry out the important work his mother had given him to do.

The clock had hardly ceased striking when the factory gates opened, and a long stream of men and boys came forth. Like imprisoned birds set free from captivity, they rejoiced in the prospect of several days' freedom from toil—for this, to many of them, was the chief joy of Christmas.

Charlie looked at each man and boy as they hurriedly passed him; and then seeing the one he had come to meet he walked slowly towards a tall

man, a giant among all the rest, and placing himself by his side took hold of his hand. It was his father.

"What, Charlie, you here!" said the father. "You ought to be at home stirring the pudding."

"There is no pudding to stir, dad, and will not be if you do not come home with me," replied Charlie earnestly.

"Then hurry away, and tell mother I'll be home in half an hour. I must have a drink with my mates to wish them a merry Christmas;" and taking his hand away, he motioned to Charlie to leave him.

"No, father; don't send me away like that. If you do not come home with the money, we shall have a wretched Christmas. Mother told me to bring you home, and not to leave you. I must carry out her wish;" and the boy grasped his father's hand once more.

"Nonsense, boy, nonsense," replied the father in an angry tone. "I suppose I can do as I like. Get away with you, or I shall have to punish you for this interference."

He turned aside to some of his companions, who were making fun and saying uncomplimentary words about the young pilot who had come to steer the father along the right course homewards.

Charlie turned away broken-hearted. Visions of a happy Christmas rapidly vanished as he saw his father and his favourite mates enter a public-house bearing the sign of the Plough Inn, whose enticing

lamp had already induced many of the factory hands to enter in and make merry.

"I will wait," said Charlie to himself. "Who knows, father may come out a little earlier than usual, and then I shall be ready to take him by the hand and lead him home. I must try to save some of the wages."

Charlie Wilson loved his mother. No task was too hard if it would bring her smile. The thought of his mother sitting at home waiting for the weekly earnings that she might buy the Christmas dinner made his heart beat quicker, and increased his determination to do his best, though the wind now blew fiercer from the river, and piercing his thin coat made him shiver with cold.

He could not help it, bitter thoughts did fill his mind—thoughts of hatred to those customs that led men to sacrifice wife and children all to gratify a craving for alcohol. Only wait till he became a man, he would let the world know what he thought.

The father had, however, dismissed all thoughts of his son. Seated in the taproom, the bright fire sending out its cheerful blaze, and the obliging landlord coming in and out with the glasses of smoking liquor, how soon the men forgot those at home, and how readily they parted with the money they had worked so hard to earn.

Two dreary hours passed; eight, nine sounded. Charlie kept his eyes fixed on the stream of people

ever going into or coming out of the tavern. At last, feeling so sleepy, he had closed his eyes for a minute, when a hand touched him and a kindly voice said,—

“What, Charlie, you waiting here! Why are you not at home hanging up the holly and the mistletoe?”

“Don’t ask me, Alfred,” replied Charlie. “Don’t ask, for indeed I cannot tell you. Go home, and leave me to my misery.”

“Well, that’s not like Charlie Wilson to his friend Alfred Greenwood. You have never sent me away before in that fashion.”

“No, Alfred, I don’t want to be unkind; but I am waiting for somebody, and much depends on my carrying out my task. I should like to go home, but it is impossible, so do not ask me anything more.”

The conversation was stopped by the appearance of Mr. Greenwood, accompanied by his wife. They had been making some rare bargains with the shopkeepers, who were anxious to sell off. Mr. Greenwood had thus come into possession of an enormous turkey and a piece of beef, both of which would have graced the table of a lord mayor; and besides these, Mrs. Greenwood was carrying a bag crammed with nuts, oranges, and apples for the children’s enjoyment on the morrow.

“What are you waiting here for, Charlie, my lad?” asked Mr. Greenwood. “This is a bad place

for you to stand; you get all the damp and the wind off the river. Come home with us, my lad, and have a warm at our fire and a cup of coffee."

"No, sir, no, sir—thank you—I must wait. Don't ask me any more; I must do my duty." As Charlie said these words it was as much as he could do to keep back the tears.

Alfred took his father aside and whispered something into his ears. The father nodded as if he understood it all, then turning to Charlie he said,—

"God bless you, dear boy! He will bless you, for you are acting as the son of your good mother ought to act; you shall reap your reward. Come in to-morrow if you can; you are welcome to all we have, for Alfred loves you, and so do we all."

"And eat this while you are waiting, my son," said Mrs. Greenwood, her eyes swimming with tears, for she loved Charlie almost as she loved Alfred, and she placed a cake and some apples in Charlie's hands.

Mr. Greenwood took hold of Charlie's hand as he said, "Good-bye, laddie; mind you be our guest to-morrow. We shall have lots of fun and plenty to eat and drink."

When the hand was withdrawn Charlie felt something round and shining. Was it a sixpence? No; it was the wrong colour for that. Drawing nearer to the public-house lamp he discovered to his surprise that it was half a sovereign.

There was no doubt now. They would have

something to eat on Christmas Day, however small it might be. Should he hurry home with the money and then come back to his post? No, he decided to wait till ten o'clock; and to pass the time he slowly ate Mrs. Greenwood's kind gift as he counted the people passing into the public-house.

Young as he was he knew quite enough of the world's doings to feel sorry at what he witnessed. Quite a large proportion of the customers of the Plough Inn were children; they came with bottles, that their parents might lay in a store of intoxicating drinks for the morrow. Young men, and not a few young women with them, went in; old men tottering on the brink of the grave sat for hours on the rough seat in front of the bar, and seemed to have no higher joy than to sip beer out of a pewter pot.

Ten o'clock chimed; it was time to go home. Should he venture in and ask his father to come with him? His heart beat rapidly at the thought, for he felt doubtful as to the kind of reception he should receive.

It was some minutes before he could make up his mind; then hastily pushing open the tavern door he hurriedly entered the room from which he heard sounds of singing and laughing.

The fire blazed cheerfully in the grate. Charlie was drawn towards it as if by instinct to warm his cold hands. The room was dense with smoke; he could hardly see who occupied the chairs.

For a minute or so he remained before the fire without being recognized; then one of his father's mates, seeing who he was, shouted in a coarse voice,—

“Hullo, Wilson! here's the boy come to take you home.”

This was bad for Charlie, for his father's anger instantly arose.

“Get off home with you at once! How dare you come here to annoy me?” he asked in a rude tone.

But Charlie would not give in without one more attempt. He walked bravely up to his father, and putting his arms lovingly round his neck, he said,—

“Do, dad, please, do come home! We do want you to help us to get ready for Christmas.”

There was no feeling of pity in the hearts of those men, whose affections were dulled by alcohol. They roared with laughter at the boy's earnest appeal, and knocked their glasses and pots on the table to drown his voice.

“Get away home with you,” shouted the unnatural father, pushing his son aside. “Get away home, or you'll be sorry for your pains.”

Tears were in Charlie's eyes; he could hardly control himself. He left his father's side; then standing in the middle of the room, he said,—

“I am only a boy, and yet I know more than you men. You are wasting your hard-won earnings in drink, which can never give you strength or happiness. Some of you have wives and children at home who

want food and clothing, and yet you waste your money here which you should spend on your families. I must, and I will, tell you the truth, whether you like it or not."

There was a sudden silence as the boy's shrill and trembling voice filled the room. The men were not accustomed to be spoken to in that manner, and especially by a boy.

"Bravo, youngster!" said Bill Bates; "bravo! give it to 'em. This is something new—a sermon in a taproom."

"Stop your talk, or you'll get a warming," said the angry father.

"I can't stop, dad," answered Charlie. "For three hours I've been waiting for you. You know mother is waiting at home to go marketing; she can't get any more trust, so it's no good her trying, and if you don't bring home the wages then we shall go short to-morrow. Do forgive me—I must speak out; I can't help it. I am sure it is right to try to save the money for mother and the children."

"Shut up there!" said the barman, who had been listening to Charlie, and saw there was a possibility of the taproom being emptied. "Take yourself off, or I'll put you out neck and crop."

Charlie cast a beseeching glance at his father, and then walked towards the door.

"Be off with you," repeated the barman; "this is not a mission hall."

"Some day it may be," said Charlie solemnly, "and I may speak in it."

He hurried out into the darkness, and was home in a few minutes, so breathless that he could scarcely speak, and so excited that his mother guessed there was something wrong.

"My dear boy, why did you wait so long by the cold river?" she asked. "I fear you will be unwell. Come, get to bed, and I will make you a basin of gruel."

"Not yet, mother—not yet," answered Charlie. "We will go out together and buy something for Christmas. A good angel gave me this half-sovereign. Dad would not come home. O mother, I have been so naughty; I have been telling big men what I think about the drink—I couldn't help it. Dad is so angry, he will never forgive me."

Mrs. Wilson clasped her excited boy to her bosom. Then she took the money, with a silent prayer of thanks to God, and after Charlie had drunk a cup of hot cocoa they went out together to do their shopping.

CHAPTER II.

AN UNEXPECTED VISIT FROM SANTA CLAUS.

"In the darkness, slowly creeping,
Comes the Children's Friend to-night;
Little ones will cease their weeping
When they see the glorious sight.
Dolly peeps from out the stocking,
Fruits to eat, and books to read.
Dear Santa, though your hours are shocking,
You have a trade that must succeed."

ANONYMOUS.

THE rest of the evening at the Plough Inn was spent in boisterous merriment; for the landlord, fearing that Charlie's speech might have some bad effect upon his drawings, had produced a bottle of whisky and made a Christmas present of it to his customers in the taproom. The fact of a free gift of intoxicating drink very quickly drove away all serious thought. The bottle was soon emptied; orders were freely given, to compensate the landlord for his kindness; he was voted a jolly good fellow; and loud choruses and conversation filled up the evening till eleven o'clock, the hour of closing, arrived.

It is an encouraging thought that, however long

the drinking-shops are open, closing time must come at last. It may seem a long time to wait from the early morning, when the publican supplies his customers with rum and milk to help them to start the business of the day, till late at night when the noisy crowds come forth to disturb the peaceful slumbers of sober folk, and to carry misery into the homes towards which they are reeling. It is a blessing that for a few hours at least out of the twenty-four the beer engine is at rest and the gin tap unturned. Blessed time indeed, as much to those behind the bar as to those in front.

The publican and his satellites now changed their behaviour. It was as much to their advantage now to get their customers out as it had been before to get them in: any drinkers found on the premises after closing hours might imperil the licence, and so take away the monopoly the public-house enjoys.

"All out!" shouted the potman, "all out! Now then you, Jack Wilson, and you, Bill Bates, wake up, you beastly drunkards, and get home to your wives and families. What sort of a Christmas do you think you will enjoy?"

Giving them a good shake, he handled them roughly, and they were soon outside in the cold and darkness.

A pathway led from the Plough Inn to a bridge which crossed the river, and any one not having the full possession of his senses might easily mistake

the path and go straight down to the river's brink, and then a few more steps would take him into the river, which was very deep at this spot. Indeed, deaths were not unknown in consequence of the unprotected state of the river; but there was little danger if passers-by would only use ordinary precaution.

Jack Wilson and Bill Bates clasped each other by the arm when they found themselves outside the public-house. Any one looking at them at this moment might have considered them far from intoxicated; but the cold air soon had its usual effect upon drinkers, and in a few minutes they were helplessly drunk. This rapid change from apparent soberness to prostrate drunkenness is brought about in this way. In a hot room the body freely perspires, and the alcohol partly passes out of the body by the pores of the skin. In the cold air the pores are somewhat closed, and the alcohol, not being able to escape, finds its way to the brain and disturbs the nervous equilibrium.

On the bridge walked to and fro a man who seemed to have done all in his power to disguise himself. Dressed in a big Inverness cape which came down to his heels, a felt hat drawn over his brow as far as possible, a big muffler around his neck partly hiding his face—very few persons would have recognized in this dress the loving husband and kind father, Mr. Greenwood.

Ridding himself of the burdens we saw him carrying home, and eating a hasty supper, he endeavoured to hide his identity, and then hurried back to the bridge to find out if Charlie was still at his post. Finding him gone, he determined to wait and, if possible, accomplish the task Charlie had so nobly attempted to carry out.

"Now, lads, look where you are going," he said to the two drunken men. "Mind what you are about, or you will walk straight into the water."

The drunken men paid but little heed to his advice, and it was only by exerting all his strength that he was able to keep them in the right path. Bill Bates soon left them and went his own road; while Mr. Greenwood struggled bravely to keep Jack Wilson on his legs, and to prevent his falling into the hands of the police.

If you have ever had the unpleasant duty of trying to lead a drunken man through a crowded street, you must have felt that much of the shame and folly of your companion was reflected on to yourself. Every time the crowd of boys made merry at the drunkard's expense, every foolish word he uttered provoking fresh merriment, made your face blush with shame, and your heart nearly lost courage, and you felt inclined to let the drunkard receive his punishment in a night's lodging in the police cell, and a fine next morning at the hands of the magistrate.

Mr. Greenwood was not one of that sort. He pitied his friend Jack Wilson. He had been associated with him at school, and for his wife and family he had the deepest respect.

As soon as possible Mr. Greenwood left the crowded streets, and took a quiet way to Jack Wilson's home. By the time they arrived Mrs. Wilson and her son had returned from shopping. With the feelings of a true gentleman, he did not wish to add to the poor wife's sorrow by allowing her to know that he had brought her husband home; so, knocking at the door, he hurried away, leaving Jack holding on to the door-handle.

"It's father," said Charlie, lifting up the blind and looking out into the street. "Don't scold him, mother."

"Never fear, my son. There's no good ever got from scolding a drunken man."

Giving this answer, the trembling woman opened the door slowly, for fear her husband should tumble into the passage. She tried to smile, and even to give him a welcome; but he had no kind word to reply, and when seated in the kitchen by the fire, demanded in angry tones more drink, and threatened all kinds of punishment if it were not brought to him.

If ever silence was golden, it was so on that night. Mrs. Wilson, like a wise woman, had learned the proverb, and determined to abide by it. She gave her husband the little food she had, and then sat quietly by and watched him fall asleep.

"Go to bed, Charlie," said Mrs. Wilson. "I will sit up awhile, for fear your father should wake up and commit any mischief."

"No, mother, don't send me away; I will sit up with you. To-morrow is Christmas; I shall not have to go to school."

"But, my dear good son, it is hard that one so young should have his rest broken. Do go and lie down."

Charlie would listen to no such commands; he would not leave his mother with a drunken man, who might wake at any moment and strike her. She was the whole world to him, and he would not desert her in her trouble. The clock on the chimney-piece struck twelve; Christmas morning had come. It found Charlie and his mother full of sorrow.

Had the angels who sang over the fields of Bethlehem looked into that little cottage, if it be possible for angels to experience sorrow, how they must have shuddered at the sight presented to their gaze. A little room barely furnished, a low fire in the grate; beside the fire, seated in the old armchair, a tall, strong-looking man, his head bent forward, fast asleep, now and then starting from his slumbers as if fighting some imaginary enemy; his once handsome features distorted by alcohol, and all the nobility of his character certainly for the moment crushed out of him.

A tall, slender lad, with a face beaming with

love and sympathy, seated on a stool beside his mother. That mother seated by the table, looking into the dying embers and thinking, thinking so much of all the joy that was past, and that seemed now to be gone for ever—those happy days in the past when her husband was free from the slavery of the drink, and their home seemed perpetual sunshine; for when a cloud of sorrow came, he and she by faith and prayer had looked beyond into the brightness.

“Santa Claus won’t come to-night, mother,” said Charlie.

“No, indeed,” answered Mrs. Wilson with a sigh; “I’ve nothing to put into the children’s stockings. I cannot even pay the rent, and with the ten shillings you brought I have only just obtained enough to help us over Christmas.”

“Never mind, mother; I shall go out to work soon. I have passed the Sixth Standard, and so am free to leave school; and after Christmas I will look out for some kind of employment.”

“You are a dear, good boy,” answered the loving mother, much touched by Charlie’s words. “But what you can earn will scarcely be enough to supply your own wants. It will be many a day before you can supply the wants of this house.”

“But I *will* help you,” replied Charlie, with determination. “I can earn five shillings a week. I only want a few pence in my pocket; you shall have

the rest. You shall see, mother, that I will help you. If I work well, I shall soon have more money. Don't take our troubles to heart too much; things may take a turn for the better in the new year."

At this moment a movement was heard overhead; little feet were certainly walking over the floor. Charlie opened the kitchen door, and he and his mother listened.

Jessie and Cissie, Charlie's sisters, had awakened from their slumbers, and were examining the stockings they had hung out, to see if Santa Claus had come.

"He hasn't come yet," said Cissie, finding the stockings empty. "Perhaps it isn't time. Let us go to sleep again."

"I hope he'll bring me a doll," said Jessie. "It's a long time since I had a doll. If I were Santa Claus, I'd give a doll to every good little girl."

"And so would I," said Cissie. "I want some doll's furniture, and some weights and scales to play at shop. Wouldn't it be nice to have a dolls' tea-party?"

The conversation ceased; the little ones got into bed. It was evident they had soon fallen asleep again.

"Poor little darlings! Santa Claus will forget you to-night," sobbed the unhappy mother.

But now a surprise was in store for them which they had never anticipated. There was an unusual sound of footsteps in the quiet street; quite a crowd

of people were certainly coming along. They stopped near the street lamp close to the Wilsons' house. There was some talking, and then a brief interval of silence. In a few moments the melodious strains of well-trained voices were heard; the dear hymns of old filled with heavenly music that little room and awakened many a memory in the heart of the suffering mother.

"It's our Sunday-school choir," said Charlie. "Mr. Andrews told me they were going to sing carols on Christmas Eve. How kind of them to sing to us!"

Mrs. Wilson sat with her arm around her dear boy, listening to the simple carols; but the drunken husband slept on, again and again fighting his imaginary enemies in his sleep, and disturbing the harmony by his incoherent sounds.

There were some in that little company outside the Wilsons' house who had deep sympathy with Mrs. Wilson and her family. Mr. Greenwood was there, and Mr. Andrews, Charlie's Sunday-school teacher, and others who knew all the hidden sorrows of that little home. They enjoyed a Christianity of the right type; they did not simply come to church and sing hymns—they loved to show their sympathy by practical help.

Charlie and his mother were startled by a knock at the door; this they had never expected. They trembled at the thought of any one coming into the kitchen and seeing the drunken father.

Charlie opened the door. Some one—he never could tell who—some one pushed a parcel into his hands and hurried away.

Quickly the parcel was opened. Oh, what treasures it contained! Santa Claus had indeed come at last.

“Look, mother, look!” cried Charlie, dancing for joy, and in his excitement forgetting all his troubles. “Look, here is a doll for Jessie, a box of doll’s furniture and a pair of scales for Cissie, and an envelope addressed to me. Oh, I wonder what is inside.”

With trembling hands he tore open the envelope. There was the very thing he had longed for, but never hoped for years to come to possess—a watch, ticking and telling the right time—a watch that needed no key to wind it—a watch of silver, and just the thing for a boy’s pocket. He could not help it; he did try to keep the tears down, but it was of no use—he cried for very joy.

“God bless the kind friends who have thought of us in this way!” said Mrs. Wilson. “Let us go and place the presents in the children’s stockings.”

They went upstairs. The voices of the little crowd outside were heard shouting, “A merry Christmas and a happy New Year!” and then all was quiet once more.

CHAPTER III.

TWO CHRISTMAS PICTURES.

“Christmas is, indeed, the season of regenerated feeling—the season for kindling not merely the fire of hospitality in the hall, but the genial flame of charity in the heart.”—WASHINGTON IRVING.

CHRISTMAS morning was ushered in by loud peals of bells from many steeples, mingled with the music of the wind, which blew through the belfries, and made a “rushing, mighty sound” among the barren trees. During the night the temperature had fallen. The ground was now hard; and although as yet no snow had fallen, or ice had covered the ponds, the hand of Jack Frost was seen in the millions of crystals which he had scattered in all directions.

There was quietness in the little town. The factory bells did not call the toilers to labour. All business was suspended; even the public-houses were closed for a few short hours. There was, however, a certain amount of pleasant bustle in the streets; for not a few were hurrying to the railway station, going to various parts of the country to meet parents and

children, and thus once more to join in the social joys of Christmas-tide.

Tired tradesmen, and men and women worn out with long hours of toil, indulged in a little longer sleep; many had their whole attention concentrated on the preparation of the Christmas feast; few, indeed, gave a thought to the heavenly Babe, whose birth the angels proclaimed over the fields of Bethlehem on Christmas Day.

Alas! there were some houses where Christmas seemed to linger on the doorstep, hesitating to come in, for there poverty, neglect, dirt, and drunkenness still held their sway. It might even be said that the sacred holiday gave more opportunity of sin, because there was less opportunity of being otherwise employed.

Charlie Wilson was up early. He had only enjoyed a few hours' rest, for his father had slept on till nearly two o'clock in the morning, and had only been persuaded to go to bed by much coaxing. The tired wife had sunk into deep repose, and had happily forgotten her misery for a short season.

Charlie, learning the time by his new watch, had crept downstairs quietly; then, closing the kitchen door, he lit the fire without making any noise, boiled the water, and prepared his mother a cup of tea.

Creeping up the stairs with his little tray, the creaking of the bedroom door awoke his mother, who

gave him one of her sweetest smiles of thanks when she saw him standing by her bedside.

"Mother, dear, just a little cup of tea to cheer you up on Christmas Day," he said cheerfully, as he impressed a sweet kiss on his mother's brow. He was just about to wish her a merry Christmas, but hesitated when he looked at his father. It would be mockery, he thought, to wish for any happiness with such anxiety resting on his mother's heart.

"Thank you, my dear boy," she said; "what a treasure you are to me! I should never get along without you."

At this moment there was a sound of boisterous laughter upstairs. Cissie and Jessie had discovered the toys which the good Santa had brought them.

"I believe Santa Claus must have been in the room when we were talking in the night. Look! he has brought us just what we want."

This was Cissie talking. She forgot that she had expressed to her friends at the Sunday school a desire to obtain the very presents that had been sent to them.

"What a lovely doll!" said Jessie, admiring and kissing. "It shuts and opens its eyes, and its clothes are all made to take off. Shan't I have a jolly washing-day when its clothes are dirty!"

"I'll ask Charlie to make me a doll's house," said Cissie; "he is so clever at sawing and at knocking in nails."

Charlie now came creeping into the room, telling them to dress quickly and to come downstairs, for they were going to have a treat for breakfast.

Charlie laid the table, and put the bacon into the Dutch oven. This was the special treat that the good mother had provided for her children. Every five minutes Charlie would look at his watch; as often he would put it to his ear, just to see if it really was going. He admired his present as only a boy can admire a watch who wears it for the first time.

"I know who sent me this present. It was Mr. Andrews, my dear Sunday-school teacher," he said to himself. "Only last Sunday, as we were walking home, he asked me what I should like best for a Christmas present, and of course I said a watch, never dreaming I should get one so soon."

Jessie was now ten years old, while Cissie was three years younger. Charlie had in some respects been their nurse. He often took them out for walks, or drove them in the old mail-cart. Many a time he had taken them down to the river's bank, to watch the boats go past; and had told them of the great sea, and promised them that when he became a man they should go and paddle in it, and make sand-castles on the shore.

Breakfast over, Charlie and his sisters went to church. The mother prepared their humble dinner, but the father slept on the heavy sleep of the

drunkard. Alcohol prevented him from taking any interest in what was going on around him—so indifferent does the man who loves drink become to all the wants of those who are dependent upon him.*

When he awoke a burning thirst irritated him, his head throbbed, and it was with difficulty that he could get on his clothes. He came downstairs with a scowl upon his face, demanded drink, and finding none in the house used bad language and violent threats. He was not happy till he was spending his last half-crown at the Plough Inn, for that was all he had left after he had wiped off his score, and paid some little debts he owed to his fellow-workmen.

The day passed drearily enough. True, the little ones sat on the hearth-rug and played with their toys; and Charlie showed them his watch, and romped with them till it was eight o'clock, when they went to bed.

What was Christmas with a father nearly all day at the public-house, and mother hardly able to smile, so great was the sorrow on her heart. When all was quiet, Charlie drew a stool close to his mother's knee and laid his head on her lap, while she stroked his face and played with his silky hair.

"Mother," he said—"mother, you know the old proverb, 'It's a long lane that has no turning.' Brighter days will come—be sure of that. It will not be always like this. I am growing up, and I will take care of you."

"I believe you, my dear boy; but it's sad walking along this rough road till we come to the turning that is to bring us hope and joy."

Their conversation was interrupted by a knock at the door; it was Alfred Greenwood, who had come to ask Charlie to supper. Charlie at first declined, for he did not want to leave his mother; but when she entreated him to go, and expressed her delight at the prospect of his enjoying a little fun, he gave way, and the two boys started off in high glee.

The Greenwoods were not rich, for the father only earned a couple of pounds a week, but great economy had enabled them to purchase the little house in which they lived. They had named it *Bethesda*. Alfred Greenwood and Charlie Wilson were in the same Sunday-school class, and attended the same Band of Hope. Mr. Greenwood encouraged their friendship; and he was glad that Charlie had come to spend a few hours with them on Christmas night.

To say that envy did not fill the heart of Charlie as he entered the Greenwoods' snug cottage would be untrue; but it was a just and righteous envy. Not that he wanted to take anything from them; he only desired that his house should be conducted in such a way that his father should have the same happy feelings and the same peaceful enjoyments as the head of the family he was now visiting.

The word WELCOME met his eye as he entered; holly and ivy were entwined among the pictures, and

an enticing piece of mistletoe hung over the door; Chinese lanterns and fairy lamps shed a warm glow over the rooms; but the best of all was the loud laughter of the children, who were joining in a game of hunt-the-slipper, which Mr. Greenwood was superintending.

There was a loud clapping of hands as Charlie entered the room. Mr. Greenwood shook hands with him heartily; Mrs. Greenwood kissed him on both cheeks. Before he could answer a word, many hands were seen offering him all kinds of good things to eat and drink. Alfred commenced to tell all about Charlie's watch, and the children would look at it inside and out. When the game was resumed Charlie had several places offered to him, for all wanted him, so that he had to settle the matter by sitting in the centre, and so pleasing them all. Fast and furious went the game. The cobbler was told to mend the shoe, to get it done by half-past two; then it was hidden out of sight; then suddenly discovered and thrown across the room, till all were exhausted with the fun and were glad to get up and run about.

Then came forfeits and bonbons. Charlie had to call his sweetheart's name up the chimney, and kiss her through the back of a chair. Then they played at postman's knock, and musical chairs, and other games, till supper-time arrived; and although every one declared they had eaten so many good things that it was quite impossible for them to eat supper, strange

to say they managed to eat what was left on the turkey's bones, and to seriously diminish the number of the mince-pies, and to greatly lessen the size of the plum-pudding. Then came "Auld Lang Syne;" and everybody kissed Charlie, Mr. Greenwood included, for he loved him like a son. Then Charlie hurried home to his mother, who was sitting all alone, sad, sad at heart, but so happy that her dear boy had kind friends.

"I tell you what it is, mother," he said, "if anybody says they can't be happy without intoxicating drinks let them go to Mr. Greenwood's, and they will see they are quite mistaken. I have never seen such a jolly family in all my life!"

"You're right, Charlie. Drink takes away happiness; it never bestows it. There, go to bed now, and dream of all your fun."

"No, mother; certainly not till father comes home."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MAN IN POSSESSION.

“Even He that died for us upon the cross, in the last hour, in the unutterable agony of death, was mindful of His mother, as if to teach us that this holy love should be our last worldly thought, the last point of earth from which the soul should take its flight to heaven.”

LONGFELLOW.

AT the Plough Inn there was a deal of noisy fun on Christmas Day. The bar was crowded with a throng of excited people; the taproom was crowded also. A roaring trade was being done; the barman and the potman were so busy that they had scarcely time for meals, and never a moment for any pleasure of their own. It was a fact that on Christmas Day the customers at the Plough Inn would only indulge in the most expensive drinks, and these drinks, containing a large proportion of alcohol, were the more injurious in consequence.

The men and women who thronged the bar and the taproom of the Plough Inn never gave a thought to the possible evils that might arise from this indulgence in alcoholic liquors. They never thought of the injury to health, of the neglect of parents

or children; home and all its obligations had no influence over them, for they bowed at the shrine of the god of drink, and disregarded every family tie, wallowing in the mire of self-gratification, but never realizing the degradation into which they had fallen.

The landlord of the Plough Inn was Mr. Joseph Richards. Possessing a strong and well-proportioned body, handsome in features, exceedingly active, he might have been easily taken for several years younger than his actual age of forty-five years. For many years he had been a gentleman's servant. In this capacity he had travelled through many continental countries. He had never missed an opportunity of making a little money, every penny of which had been carefully invested. With these savings, and a little legacy his mother had left him, he purchased the right to sell intoxicating drinks. He looked forward to an easy life and the possibility of making an early fortune.

It had never occurred to Mr. Richards that the inhabitants of the quiet little town of Graystoke could be guilty of the smallest amount of immoderate drinking. He had walked through the town in the summer; he had noticed the well-kept gardens; he had observed the men coming out of the factories, and the vast majority seemed very anxious to get home, to water and weed the little plot of ground each one possessed; he had made many visits

to the Plough Inn, and had been charmed by the number of pleasure-seekers who just dropped in for a drink and then went on their way; he had seen but little drunkenness, and had determined that none should be permitted on his premises.

He soon found, however, that there was another side to the picture. The barman had to tell him the trade secrets—he had to learn how the cellar work was carried out—and to show him how big profits could be made by not caring what kind of liquor his customers drank, or how much money they expended.

His first Bank Holiday at the Plough Inn opened his eyes; he saw sights that he could never have believed possible. When he counted his gains he felt a conviction that the money was not properly his, for in many instances it was the price of happiness, and in a few cases it was the price of wounds and imprisonment.

As the winter came on, and there was little employment or amusement in the open air, the taproom filled in the evening, and he found himself night by night serving men with large supplies of liquor, the purchase of which meant little food for the children, heavy debts with the neighbouring tradesmen, and threats from the landlords.

True his balance grew heavier at his banker's, and his accounts with the brewer and the distiller grew larger; but, alas! he found himself daily growing

more greedy for money, and his heart growing harder and harder, so that sights which had sickened him at first now made no impression on his feelings.

Religiously trained by good parents, he had until very recently been faithful to the promise he had made to a dying mother to make the Bible his friend, and never to allow a day to pass without prayer. Now he was so weary, morning or night, that the Bible was forgotten and prayer neglected—there was no time, be it Sunday or week day, for such exercises. Besides this, assisting in the scenes he constantly witnessed, it was impossible for him either to read his Bible, or to go down upon his knees to offer his prayer of thanksgiving, or to seek Divine direction for the day's doings. He felt certain there were many kind and good people who sold intoxicating drinks; but he felt that he was not carrying out the old principles in which he had been trained—he would not be such a hypocrite as to seek God's blessing on a trade his conscience condemned. Not a year had passed since he became a publican, and now he heartily wished himself out of the business; but that was easier thought than done. His mind was troubled with these convictions when he heard with amazement the little speech that Charlie Wilson had uttered on Christmas Eve in the taproom; and though he fought against the impression it left upon his mind, when the house was closed and the excitement of the bar over the speech haunted him and

increased his growing dislike to the business he was carrying on.

"I'd rather be engaged in any other trade," he said to himself. "The butcher and the baker have no such heartrending scenes to witness as I have. I wish I was out of it altogether."

Then he calmed his conscience with the determination that he would do all in his power to discourage drunkenness. Bill Bates and Jack Wilson found themselves in the street before the hour of closing; but there were no permanent good results. Some men got drunk quicker than others, some escaped his watchful eye, and with all his good intentions he found it impossible to separate drunkenness from drink.

Mr. Richards would, under no pretence, allow his wife and children into the bar; they always entered the house by the back entrance, and were not allowed to be seen by the customers. This was a great relief to Mrs. Richards, for she had greatly opposed her husband taking the public-house. It was with tears that she had entreated him to attempt some other business, and offered to throw all her energies heart and soul into it; but other influences prevailed, and she found herself the wife of a man carrying on a business she greatly disliked.

She would not give up her Bible or neglect to attend her church; and though some self-righteous persons looked at her unkindly, and like the priest

and the Levite passed by on the other side, she determined not to harden her heart, and daily she prayed that God would open a road by which her husband would be able to find another means of earning his living.

The workers in the Band of Hope at the Wesleyan church were astonished to find the publican's children attending the meetings; but they welcomed them kindly, and even went out of their way to make them at home. Their quarrel was not with those who carried on the trade, but with the ignorance that allowed such a business to prosper.

It was in this way that Charlie Wilson and Arthur Richards became friends. Charlie, with true gentlemanly feelings, would never refer to the business that Arthur's father carried on; but Arthur was not so careful on the matter, and often expressed in strong language how miserable he felt in being obliged to live at a public-house. Thus one evening, as they were going home from the Band of Hope meeting, Arthur said,—

“I say, Charlie, isn't it a shame that I live at a public-house? You don't know how I hate it.”

“You are not the only one who dislikes his father's business. It is a blessing that every man can take up what business he likes best; ours is a free country,” answered Charlie warmly.

“Wait till I am old enough; I'll soon be off from the Plough Inn,” said Arthur.

"Stick to your pledge, Arthur," said Charlie as they parted, "and I'll stick to mine, and we'll show our parents what we can do."

Charlie's enthusiasm was, however, very soon damped when he entered his home. Hastily opening the kitchen door, he observed a strange man sitting by the fire reading a newspaper, and evidently making himself very comfortable. Charlie at first thought he had made a mistake and had come into the wrong house; but no, there was no mistake, it was the right kitchen, only mother was not in her usual seat.

Hastening upstairs he found his mother in tears in her bedroom.

"What is the matter, mother?" he asked; "and who is that horrible man downstairs?"

"Don't speak unkindly about the man, Charlie," remonstrated the mother. "He is only doing his duty, and we have no right to be unkind to him."

"But who is he?" repeated Charlie. "I'll soon have him out," and he tucked up his coat sleeves, as if he really meant to make the attempt.

"Don't be foolish, Charlie; listen to what I have to tell you. That man is the broker's man. He is put in by the landlord's agent. We owe six weeks' rent, and since we cannot pay the agent threatens to take our furniture. We have a few days to find the money, and during that time the man must live here to see that we do not get rid of our goods."

"I'll soon settle him if he dare to take our furniture for a paltry six weeks' rent; I'll soon get rid of him." Charlie's face was red with anger.

"Don't be rash, Charlie; the landlord is not to blame—indeed, he has been most generous to us. His security for the rent is our furniture. We ought to pay every week, for he has to pay the taxes and to keep the house in repair; besides, he must get interest on his money. It is we who are to blame, for not paying what we have promised to pay, for we can well afford to do so."

"I know what it means, mother—I know what it means—the money that ought to go to the landlord goes to the publican; and that man, mother," said Charlie softly—"that man is the father of the boy I love—my dear friend, Arthur Richards. Is it not dreadful to think of it?"

The thought was too much for Charlie; he fell back on the bed in an agony of tears.

But he soon understood that anger and tears would not get them out of the difficulty; something must be done. His father was not at home; and even if he were, probably he would not have sixpence in his pocket, and it was not at all unlikely that half his week's earnings was spent before he received them.

Down into the kitchen Charlie went, and tried to look as pleasant as possible at Tom Tripper, the broker's man. He was not a man that one would love at first sight. He wore a shabby coat and a

dirty cap, and smoked a black clay pipe. His beard indicated that he had not troubled the barber lately, and his grimy hands had certainly not made friends with soap and water for some time.

"How much do we owe?" said Charlie.

"Two pounds," replied Tom Tripper, producing a dirty piece of blue paper; "thirty shillings for rent, and ten shillings for expenses."

"Will the landlord give us time if we pay part?" asked Charlie.

"Yes; pay me a sovereign and off I goes," replied Tom, feeling glad at the prospect of getting even part of the money.

"Well, you keep quiet till I come back; and don't you speak unkindly to mother, or you'll hear of it."

Mrs. Wilson wondered where Charlie was going when she heard the street door shut, but Charlie knew what he was about. He must make a sacrifice, and make it he would. He looked at his watch as he went along. It was a hard struggle to part with it, but it must be done to save his little home.

Charlie knew that sometimes his mother had to pay visits to the pawnbroker's to raise a few shillings to buy bread. He would ask the pawnbroker to lend him a sovereign on the security of his watch.

He walked boldly into the shop, pulled the watch out of his pocket, and offered it across the counter.

"What now, my lad?" said the pawnbroker.

"I want a sovereign, sir," he stammered, "a sovereign to get the broker's man out of the house."

"It's more than I usually lend on a watch of this description," said the pawnbroker, "but you are a noble lad, and you shall have it."

The ticket was made out, the money handed over, and the pawnbroker whispered to Charlie as he went out,—

"You can borrow it if you want it for any special occasion. God bless you!"

Ten minutes after, the broker's man had gone. Charlie had a receipt for the money, and for a time at least the home was safe.

"Mother, mother, come down at once," shouted Charlie, his heart leaping with joy; "the coast is clear. I told you I'd get rid of the broker's man, and so I have."

But to all her questions as to how he had obtained the money, she received the same answer,—

"You wait a little while, mother, and you will find out."

CHAPTER V.

THE GREAT STRIKE.

“ The broil long doubtful stood ;
As two spent swimmers that do cling together,
And choke their art.”—SHAKESPEARE.

THERE was considerable commotion in the town of Graystoke ; something unusual was astir. The streets were alive with excited men and women ; even the children seemed to have caught the infection, for they were talking to each other quite loudly as they walked to school, instead of repeating their lessons, as was their general habit. A stranger coming into the town would have asked why so many men were standing at the street corners, and why their faces bore such hard expressions. Why were these hardy sons of toil not at their daily task ? for it was not a holiday, and there was a great demand for the particular commodity for which the town of Graystoke was famous. The cause may be told in a few words—this was the first day of the Great Strike.

For some months there had been an uneasy feeling among the workmen at Graystoke. Certain leaders

of an association of the Trade Societies had been there holding meetings; many hard and exciting speeches had been made; the workmen had been invited to combine for shorter hours and larger pay. They were to demand more money for less work, and should the masters not accede to their demands, they were at once to abstain from work, and so force the masters to give way.

A time favourable to the men, but most unfavourable to the masters, had been chosen. The factories were overburdened with orders, the men were working over-hours, and there seemed a possibility of great prosperity both to men and to masters.

Many an industrious man was glad of this, for it helped him to save a little money for a rainy day; and many a struggling wife was full of joy, because she could now hope to pay off debts, and to put a little money in the savings bank for the time when sickness or want should necessitate a larger outlay from the family purse.

The masters had no desire to see the men idle, but when the demands of the men were laid before them, they had to say at once that to grant such demands meant nothing short of ruin to themselves; they could not increase wages and close the factories several hours earlier than usual. All their contracts had been made on the supposition that the pay of their workmen and the hours of labour would continue as before.

They met the men in conference, but no favourable results came about. The men came back sulky and full of anger; Job Trottman, their leader, was fierce in his expression of hatred to the masters.

"Let us rather die in the gutter than give in," he shouted; "we're in for a fight, and we'll carry it through to the bitter end."

The order went forth that on a certain day all the men were to abstain from work. The factory bells therefore ceased to ring out their invitation to labour; the furnaces, which had never been extinguished night or day in living memory, were put out, and the red flames which licked the top of the chimney shafts were seen no more.

For a few weeks matters went on quietly. The society handed out its strike-pay, and with this and what the wives could earn, or raise at the pawnbroker's, they managed to provide scanty meals; but the funds were soon nearly exhausted, the amount of pay was reduced, and with its reduction the comforts of home were reduced also.

Many a noble mother went with only a couple of meals a day so that the children might have more; but soon the children began to suffer. They tramped to school with hunger written on their faces, and it was soon found that the brain improperly fed failed to retain the instruction it received.

There were kind people who came to the rescue; soup kitchens and children's breakfasts and dinners

were started. Mr. Andrews and Mr. Greenwood were very busy. But all that charity could do was but as a drop in the ocean; there were many proud hearts who would rather suffer than accept a gift.

Mrs. Wilson and her family were among the earliest to suffer. She had no reserve fund, and her credit was already bad; the tradesmen shook their heads when she asked for a trifling credit for bread or milk. Jack Wilson was very busy among the strikers. His gigantic form was seen constantly at the street corners; he made fierce speeches about justice, but he neglected all justice to his family, for most of his strike-pay was spent in intoxicating drink.

The only busy people were the publicans and the pawnbrokers. The publicans had little risk of debt, for if the week's score was not wiped off the next Saturday night, the supply of drink was stopped; the pawnbrokers' warehouses were full of the clothing of the people, and even with the furniture of the very poor.

Charlie Wilson soon realized the terrible position in which his mother was placed. His mother had persuaded him to continue at school that his education might be still further improved; but now poverty had entered into the home, in spite of all that kind friends were doing, he determined that he would add his mite to the family purse. To whom could he go better than to his dear Sunday-school teacher, Mr. Andrews?

Mr. Andrews kept the chief grocery stores in Graystoke; his honest dealing had gained him a large patronage. He kept to his legitimate business, and would not degrade his premises by selling intoxicating drinks.

Though Mr. Andrews had never confessed it, it was a fact that he cherished a deep affection for Charlie Wilson. He had been his scholar for many years, and as the years rolled on Charlie found in Mr. Andrews's loving teaching and ways what he missed at home; and Mr. Andrews, not having any children of his own, loved to hear the boy talk, and felt a thrill of pleasure in his company.

It was therefore with a feeling of great pleasure that Mr. Andrews saw Charlie walk into his shop one morning soon after the strike began. He received him kindly, shook him by the hand, and took him aside into his private office.

"Well, Charlie, what can I do for you?" he asked, patting the silken hair of his dear scholar.

"I want some work, sir. You know how we are situated at home."

"Yes, Charlie, I know that you have had great trouble. I am afraid the strike has made it worse!"

"Yes, I am sorry to say it has already," answered Charlie; "but for kind friends like yourself, I don't know what we should have done. I want, however, to be of some use myself. Why can't I earn a little

money? Can you give me something to do, sir, or can you recommend me to any one?"

"I should like to put you in the desk," answered Mr. Andrews, "but I cannot at present. I can only give you a very menial position."

"Anything, sir, anything I will do, with pleasure—only give me a trial."

Mr. Andrews looked at the earnest face of the dear lad he loved; then writing a line on one of his private cards, he said,—

"Take this card to Mr. Francis next door, and he will give you three aprons. Put on one, and I will give you something to do at once."

In a few minutes Charlie was dressed in his new garment, and stood waiting for orders. That first day was a day of trial, but he stood it well. He cleaned the windows, polished the brass plates, ran errands, and exhibited an intelligent application to his business which astonished all but Mr. Andrews, who knew his capacity and his will.

On Friday night, when he received his first eight shillings he had ever earned, and a little parcel to carry home, he almost cried for joy. He never stopped running till he reached his door.

"Mother," he shouted, "open your hands and I will fill them with money!" and the sound of the silver as it fell into his mother's hands was the sweetest music he had ever heard in his life.

"Thank you! thank you, Charlie!" replied the grate-

ful mother, kissing her boy with a true mother's kiss. "What should I do without you?"

"Now, mother," said Charlie, "you must not fret again. When I get a little more experience I shall have more money—that is what Mr. Andrews said. What a kind gentleman he is! I shall never be able to do enough for him."

"How good of him," said Mrs. Wilson, "to take you, an inexperienced lad, and give you so much money."

"Mother," answered Charlie earnestly, "he is a true Christian. He does not only preach, but he carries out what he preaches. With my eight shillings, mother, and the strike-money, we shall not starve, I hope."

"We should not, Charlie, if the money were spent in the house and not at the Plough Inn."

"I say, mother, it is a wicked shame that the public-houses should be prospering while there is so much poverty." Charlie startled his mother by the earnest way in which he spoke; he was beginning to feel deeply for those who were wronged by the drink habit.

But to the credit of the publicans it must be said that many of them deeply regretted that so much money was spent in alcoholic liquors; but with their enforced idleness the men wanted some place in which to meet and talk, and that only place was the public-house—and there, of course, they felt bound to drink.

Mr. Richards was among these conscientious men. He had offended several of his best customers by refusing to supply them with drink. His good wife suggested that he should sell some nutritious food at a very low rate.

Charlie's anger was therefore much weakened when he saw in the window of the Plough Inn a large placard announcing,—

GOOD BEEF SOUP,

ONE PENNY A HALF-PINT BASIN.

"That's a step in the right direction," he said to himself. "Soup a penny a half-pint ought to knock beer out entirely. I hope it will."

CHAPTER VI.

THE PUBLICAN AND THE SOUP.

“It is praiseworthy for a man to be kind to his fellow-men. Shall we command him to succour the shipwrecked, to show the wanderer his road, to share his bread with the hungry?”—SENECA.

WHEN Tom Tripper left the Wilsons' cottage he was in a state of unusual excitement; for so quiet a philosophical spirit things had taken a turn which had upset all his plans. He had looked forward to a stay of several days, to a peaceful time with his pipe and his mug of beer; and then, supposing the rent was not paid, he would have had the painful duty of breaking up the little home to satisfy the landlord's demands.

Some days after he said to himself, “I wonder where that boy got that sovereign. 'Tain't often a boy talks to a broker's man in the way he talked to me. Well, anyhow, he's a plucky little chap, and I guess it'll be some time afore the landlord puts me into that house again. I don't like being in possession where there is a teetotal wife—not a drop of drink anywhere. If Jack Wilson was like his wife, I shouldn't have had that job. Anyhow, I must have

a glass, so I'll step into the Plough and see if any of my chums are there."

When Tom reached the public-house he stared with amazement at the notice in the window as to the sale of soup. Bill Bates was spelling it out also, his mouth and eyes wide open, and his hands in his pockets.

"That's a rum go," said Bill—"a publican a-selling soup. Well, who'd 'a thought it! I never heard on such a thing afore. What say you, Tom?"

"The rummiest, funniest, and most extraordinary thing I ever known in all my life; and I've known some funny things in my experience as a broker's man." He spoke his sentences carefully, taking puffs at his pipe as he slowly uttered his words.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Bill, "a publican a-selling of soup, as if beer weren't good enough. Why, the next thing will be they'll be starting selling Bibles and tracts, and opening the taproom for the Salvation Army to preach in."

"'Tain't no good, Bill," said Tom; "men will have beer, no matter what these teetotal chaps say. Suppose we go in and see what kind of stuff this soup is; anyhow, it must be thicker than beer."

Bill laughed again, and thought it would be good fun just to go in and laugh at the soup-buyers; so the two men pushed open the swinging doors, and in they walked, full of curiosity and ready for any mischief.

On the bar were placed a number of soup basins, and close at hand at least a dozen quart jugs. Behind the bar was a big iron copper, covered with an iron lid. Inside this copper the soup was boiling, sending forth a most appetizing flavour. Underneath was a small ring of gas giving out just enough heat to keep the soup at the boil.

The barman didn't seem to look himself at all. He had never been used to this mixture of trades, half public-house and half cook-shop. Mr. Richards, however, had told him that if he served him well, he should not go unrewarded; so he industriously stirred the soup and ladled it out as well as he could, trying his best to convince himself that all was right.

"Listen to what I say, Dick," said Mr. Richards. "You are to encourage people to buy soup, and you are not to encourage them to buy beer or spirits. Tell the men to go into the taproom, and sit down by the fire and enjoy their soup. I can't stop selling the drink entirely, or I should have my landlord complaining against me, for by so doing the house might lose its licence."

"All right, sir," answered Dick. "I'm your servant to do as you tell me; but you'll ruin the trade, sir, that you will. After all, it's better to see these hungry strikers drinking soup than drinking beer. Beer's all very well in its way, but it can't make flesh and blood like good soup can."

When Bill Bates and Tom Tripper stood before

the bar, and inhaled the odour of the boiling soup, they immediately began to feel hungry.

"I say, Bill," said Tom, "that there soup does smell proper; suppose we try it."

"Well, it'll be a change from beer. Anyhow, it's precious cold to-day, and hot soup 'll warm us up. Here, give us a couple of basins," he said, addressing himself to the barman, and throwing down the twopence on the bar counter.

They carried their soup into the taproom and laughed as they spooned it out, burning their tongues in their eagerness to eat it; but they felt mighty better, they said, when it was finished, and wiped their lips, feeling as they had never felt before after drinking in the public-house.

While they were eating their soup Mr. Richards walked into the taproom. His face bore an anxious look. He had been struggling against himself, for his conscience had been roused by the sorrow and misery he saw around him. He knew it was not just to attribute all that suffering to the excessive use of intoxicating drinks; but he knew that the little money the men received was often nearly all expended in the purchase of alcoholic liquors, and that their wives and children were thus robbed of what was due to them.

"Well, lads, how do you like your soup?" he asked cheerfully. "It's made of good stuff, I can tell you, and it won't get into your heads."

"It's splendid, landlord," answered Tom; "and now we'll wash it down with a little beer."

"Now, look here," said Mr. Richards earnestly; "you'll laugh at me, I dare say, but I can't see all this hunger around me without doing something to stop it. Now, beer won't stop the hunger at all, but good soup will. Take my advice, lads—take a quart of soup home to your wives and children, and they'll thank you heartily for it."

Strange to say the men didn't laugh, but took the matter quite seriously. They quietly submitted to the landlord's advice, and each one walked home with a quart jug of soup—a joyful surprise to their hungry families.

This departure from the ordinary trade of the publican created quite a sensation in the town. Many of the men who wouldn't go into the soup-kitchens which were associated with some religious denomination, because, as they said, "the parson wanted to get them into his clutches," readily entered the Plough Inn and purchased the soup for their families. Some of the other public-houses became deserted, their owners looking on with disgust at the good work carried on by Mr. Richards.

"Why doesn't he take himself off with his soup," they said, "and let us carry on our legitimate trade? We are licensed victuallers, and not keepers of cook-shops."

But in this statement they were quite wrong.

True, they were called licensed victuallers ; but they did not sell victuals, only those intoxicating drinks which actually took away the appetite, and caused the spending of money which ought to have been expended in the purchase of good food.

But Mr. Richards little thought that by his action, and by his advice to his customers, he was partially at least carrying out Charlie Wilson's prophecy.

CHAPTER VII.

THE STRIKE RIOT.

"The fiend replied not, overcome with rage,
But like a proud steed reined, went haughty on,
Champing his iron curb."—MILTON.

WINTER had come at last like a lion. A fall in the temperature had suddenly revealed how quickly and how powerfully Jack Frost sets to work when he takes any business in hand. There was no mistake about the fact that Jack meant to have matters all his own way, if it were only for a time.

The fields surrounding the little town of Graystoke were covered with frost whiter than the icing on a birthday cake. He who had an eye for the beautiful stood awestruck with amazement at the change which a couple of days' cold had brought about. There was now no sound of the rippling stream; even the river had its banks edged with a coating of ice. The birds still sang, but it was a timorous song, for they soon began to suffer from the want of food. Insect life was nearly dead. No sound was heard of the buzzing bee out in search of honey,

or of the great dragon-fly as it skimmed across the waters in pursuit of its prey. The sheep huddled together under the trees to get a little warmth by mutual contact; and the dull leaden sky above threatened a fall of snow such as would make locomotion difficult if not impossible.

Nature was taking a rest for a season—a rest much needed after all the labours of the summer and the autumn—a rest that would produce a glorious activity in the days to come, when spring should appear once more.

The vigorous, the healthy, the well-fed, and the well-clothed clapped their hands with joy when they noticed the delicate handiwork that Jack Frost produced even on the very windows of their bedrooms. Walking over the iron ground, crisp with frost, was now a pleasure; the observant eye looked with delight on the spiked holly leaf edged with snow crystals glistening in the sunshine like so many magnificent diamonds.

On the flat, marshy ground near the river, where the water had overflowed its banks, an excellent skating-ground had been thus prepared; and here, all day long, and especially in the evening, the happy skaters rejoiced in the exercise so long denied to them, and which had come as such a pleasant surprise. At night, when the torches blazed and the scene was enlivened by the appearance of many itinerant tradesmen who sold drinks—of which it

might be said that their chief recommendation was that they were hot and sweet and contained no intoxicating property—not a few of the men on strike added to the general liveliness of the spot by the candles and the naphtha lamps they produced to give light while they put on the skates of those who were either too lazy or unable to do so for themselves.

Some, however, who gazed upon the merry scene wondered how men could be so happy in the midst of so much poverty and misery; for the strikers were as determined as ever not to give in. They would have all or nothing. The masters too held their ground; they said they might as well be ruined one way as another.

It was marvellous how the hearts of men opened at the sight and revelation of sorrow. The masters subscribed handsomely to the relief funds, though many of them had to economize in a great many ways to meet their losses, and not a few suffered in ways quite unknown to the general public.

But it mattered not how much was subscribed; no distribution of blankets, money, or provisions could give back to the people the money they had lost by their enforced idleness. Among a certain section of the men, who despised the open-handed charity, and only demanded work on what they called a "fair wage," there was a growing restlessness. There were rumours afloat that attempts would be made to wreck

some of the factories, destroy the machinery, and thus bring the masters to submission.

Angry speeches had been made at some of the gatherings of the men. Some of the tradesmen were taking precautions, for they expected their premises to be looted. Hunger, which, as Carlyle says, is one of the great moving forces of the world, moved many a man to wish he had an easy opportunity of breaking the eighth commandment.

Thus it happened that, though there were shouts of merriment among the skaters, there were hearts full of sad forebodings. That winter might see shame and sorrow, even to the shedding of blood.

Wednesday was the early closing day at Graystoke. On this afternoon the company of skaters was large, and a number of boys and youths were enjoying the healthy sport.

Charlie Wilson and his friend Arthur Richards were both there. Mr. Richards had given his son a pair of skates of the latest pattern, and Mr. Andrews, hearing of this, had quietly done the same to Charlie.

"Thank you, Charlie," said Arthur; "you put on skates as if you had been brought up to the business. Now I will put on yours; sit down and let me try my hand."

The boys were soon skimming over the ice, their cheeks glowing with heat and their hearts beating with delight.

"This is glorious fun," remarked Charlie. "What a clever man he was who found out skating. I do hope the frost will last for a few weeks."

"Yes, that's all very well for us, but you forget that the frost means misery to thousands."

Charlie felt himself rebuked at Arthur's words; he remembered that already the suffering had greatly increased.

"Do you know, Arthur," said Charlie, very solemnly—they were now having a rest—"I heard several men talking together outside our house; and from their words and manner, I should not be surprised at a disturbance very soon."

Charlie was wise enough not to say that one of those men was his own father.

"Well, I don't know anything about strikes," said Arthur, "or about the rights or wrongs of the masters or the men; all I know is this, Charlie—strike or no strike, there are plenty of customers at my father's shop, and though some buy soup, many more buy spirits or beer."

"Look here, Arthur," said Charlie earnestly. "I'm your chum, am I not?"

"Yes, you are, Charlie; we'll be brothers, if you like that better."

"No, I like chums. Brothers are often very different from each other, but chums are supposed at least to have the same tastes. Let us join hands and promise each other that, God helping us, we will

do all in our power to put down the drinking habit in our nation."

The boys shook hands. It was no ordinary promise. They meant it. They would be patriots of the right sort; they would make war on this evil custom and debasing habit.

As Charlie neared the High Street an unusual sound met his ears, a sound as of the tramping of many feet, a sound of voices loud and angry. He listened for a few moments—were his fears to be so soon realized? Making a short cut through a narrow lane, he saw a number of men marching along singing some rude chorus, the exact meaning of which he could not quite understand, but he certainly heard the words,—

"A fair day's work for a fair day's pay,
Or no labour we'll give you—nay, nay, nay!"

At the head of this rude procession was Job Trottmann. He carried a red flag in one hand and a stout stick in the other, and every now and then he turned to the men and urged them forward. Most of the men carried some kind of weapon. One man indeed had a pistol, and several carried bars of iron; others had stones in their hands, ready to cast at any opponent.

Though Charlie was some distance away, he could distinguish the gigantic form of his father. His young heart trembled at the sight, for he knew at once that

it was the strikers who were out, and were now on the point of carrying out their threats.

With wonderful forethought he at once decided that the men would attack his master's premises, for there they would find the store of food they needed. He knew Mr. Andrews had gone up to London, and would not return till late in the evening. What could be done to protect his master's property, and to save Mrs. Andrews from possible insult or injury?

In three minutes he was at the police station, and demanded of the constable at the desk to be permitted to see the chief officer.

"You seem in a great hurry, my lad," said the constable, who took the matter with remarkable coolness; "can't you tell me your business?"

"I'd rather see the chief officer. The matter is urgent; it may mean loss of property or loss of life. Do please take me to the officer in charge."

The officer soon understood what Charlie had to tell him; he had himself heard the sound of the tramp of the strikers, and had telephoned for a number of constables. In five minutes he had gathered around him at least twenty officers of the law, and with these and Charlie by his side he hurried to Mr. Andrews's premises.

"Excuse me, sir, offering you a suggestion," said Charlie, "but would it not be well to get Mrs. Andrews to a place of safety first? I know a gentleman who would gladly give her shelter."

"And who is he?" asked Head Constable Mowbray.

When Mr. Greenwood's name was mentioned the suggestion was at once accepted; and being admitted at the side entrance, Mrs. Andrews and the maid were soon under Mr. Greenwood's hospitable roof.

The crowd of angry men were, however, too quick for the constables, for when they arrived they found Mr. Andrews's shop surrounded by the rioters. The shop had no shutters—blinds were drawn to hide the goods when business was over; the doors were locked; and a light was always kept burning so that the constable on duty could look in and see that all was well.

"Now then, lads," shouted Job Trottmann, "here's plenty, and only waiting for you to handle. Let us show these masters that if they won't give us work at a fair pay, then we'll help ourselves."

Jack Wilson pushed Job on one side, and hurling a large stone at the plate-glass window, was the first to do violence. A volley of stones soon followed, and then there was a struggle to see who would be first to enter.

The doors were opened and the men hurried in. The shop, left in perfect order, was soon in a state of confusion. The men jostled one another in their efforts to fill pockets and arms with as much as could be carried away.

Whether it was an accident, or whether it was done maliciously, no one ever knew, but somehow in the

confusion the gas jet that had been left burning was broken, and a stream of gas escaping became ignited. Only a few minutes elapsed before the shop was filled with flame and smoke, and now the looters fought as eagerly to get out as they had fought before to get in.

Job Trotman and Jack Wilson saw at once that the mischief they had commenced might lead to the most serious results. There was a fearful struggle for life; the rapidly-spreading flames communicated themselves to the clothing of the men, and with fearful oaths and curses they fought their way into the open air.

Jack Wilson, using his great strength, had been trying to move a hogshead of sugar. The hogshead had moved too rapidly, and he found himself jammed in such a manner that he was quite unable to escape. The noise and confusion drowned his cries for help.

Head Constable Mowbray had sent off for the fire-engine; but the messenger had hardly disappeared when the engine arrived, Charlie Wilson sitting on the front, with the driver and Mr. Greenwood by his side.

It was found out afterwards that Charlie had read somewhere of a heavy shower of rain having dispersed crowd of rioters quicker than a volley from muskets would have done; and he had told Mr. Greenwood that a fire-engine would be the best weapon to keep the strikers out of mischief.

The arrival of the firemen was hailed with shouts of joy, and especially by Jack Wilson, who was in great peril and pain. The firemen soon released him from his dangerous position.

"Fetch the ambulance and take him to the hospital," said the head constable. "The unhappy man cannot walk; probably his leg is broken."

"O my poor father! my poor father! what has happened to him now?" sobbed Charlie when he saw his father brought out.

"Don't fret, my boy," said Mr. Greenwood—"don't fret, Charlie; let us thank God that you thought of the fire-engine. No one knows what might have happened if you had not done so."

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE HOSPITAL.

"O madness, to think use of strongest wines
And strongest drinks our chief support of health !
When God with these forbidden made choice to rear
His mighty champion, strong above compare,
Whose drink was only from the liquid brook."

MILTON.

THE hospital to which Jack Wilson was conveyed was known as the Cottage Hospital. Not that it was carried on in a building that could be rightly called a cottage. It was a three-storied building ; and although not specially built for hospital purposes, it had been so skilfully adapted that a stranger might well have been forgiven for believing that it had never been used for any other object than that at present carried on within its walls. The fact was that some years ago several gentlemen in the town, being distressed at the want of hospital accommodation, had set earnestly to work to gather subscriptions. The result had been that sufficient had been collected to purchase a large house, and to fit it up with all the modern appliances for hospital work.

Among these Mr. Andrews and Mr. Greenwood led

the way, and consequently they held a very influential position on the hospital committee. From the first both these gentlemen determined that the hospital should be conducted on temperance principles; and by this they meant that not only should all the officials be abstainers, but that no intoxicating drinks should as a rule be given to any of the patients, either as medicines or as beverages.

The doctors were to show that medicines could be prepared, diseases cured, and operations performed without the aid of alcohol. They were to be perfectly free to use alcohol, if they thought its use might possibly assist a patient's recovery; but all such uses were to be recorded in a book kept for ready reference.

Some of the patients made many complaints of this temperance treatment. They seemed to consider—indeed some of them expressed themselves in this way—that the time spent in a hospital should be devoted to the drinking of stout and the sipping of port wine. It was some compensation, they thought, for the enforced inactivity and the pain they had to suffer, that they should be able to obtain in the hospital those costly intoxicating drinks which otherwise would be out of their power to purchase.

When they found that milk and beef-tea and other nourishing foods were all they obtained, they began to complain; and when some serious cases were found incurable, or a patient gave way under an operation,

all this was attributed to the want of alcohol, and no amount of argument or facts could convince them that intoxicating drinks could not cure all kinds of complaints, from a headache to a broken leg.

The publicans would not subscribe to the hospital, because they said that its practice had a tendency to make men abstainers, and so to injure the drink traffic; while others who subscribed heartily declared that the hospital would hardly be needed if the drink trade were abolished, for it had been proved that nine-tenths of the patients in most hospitals had been brought to that condition by the use of intoxicating drinks.

It was to this hospital that Jack Wilson was carried when he was rescued from the burning premises. In a fainting condition he had been placed on the ambulance, and was soon in the accident ward, with the house surgeon and several doctors of the neighbourhood around his bedside. The examination showed that both his legs were seriously injured by the heavy hogshead of sugar, but fortunately not so badly as to need amputation.

It was a new experience to Jack Wilson when he found himself drinking milk and cocoa. He could scarcely relish the flavour of these drinks, so greatly had his natural taste been destroyed by alcohol. And yet there was a feeling of comfort and joy in his heart, when the pain having been lessened he was able to admire the general brightness of his

surroundings, and the kindness of the nurses, ever ready to administer to his wants.

Pictures hung on the walls which attracted his attention, for he was a man not devoid of knowledge; a bright fire burned in the grate; there was a joyful atmosphere in the ward, so that he felt a sensation in his heart he had never experienced before; and as the days passed, and kind words were often said to him, and the doctor cheered him by the hope that he would soon be well, he really began to feel a desire for a new life.

Mrs. Wilson brought Cissie and Bessie as often as she could; and Charlie was there also, with always something to tell about the strike, and the mischief the strikers had done, and how Mr. Andrews's premises had been repaired. Then he would go on to say how he was getting on in business, and could now tell the difference between butter and margarine, and that he knew when sugar was made from the sugar-cane and when it was made from beetroot; and how he had bright hopes of becoming a good shopman, and perhaps in time a buyer.

It was a strange experience that Jack Wilson had as he lay on his bed and listened to Charlie's prattle. He seemed to know now more of his boy than ever he had known before; he had never believed that there was so much intelligence and brightness in the lad. And as for Cissie and Bessie when they came so nicely dressed, and his good wife talking so kindly

to him and offering to read to him, he gave way under all these kindnesses; and many resolutions he made to become a reformed man when he was able to go back to his work, if indeed there would ever be any more work to do.

Unfortunately, others visited the sick man also. Bill Bates came, and so did Job Trotteman, and they both had something to say about the temperance treatment in the hospital; indeed, Job, acting against all the rules of the place, brought in a flask of gin, and was handing it to his friend, when Nurse Rebecca detected him, and ordered him out of the hospital, at the same time advising him not to come there again.

The weeks passed slowly. Jack became impatient and began to grumble, and Bill tried to make him believe that he did not get well quickly because he was not allowed any intoxicating drinks. Jack complained to the doctor, and asked if he could not have some stimulant, as the rules of the hospital allowed it if it were considered absolutely necessary.

Dr. Chapman smiled, for he pitied the ignorance of the men who believed that stimulants could help a man in Jack Wilson's condition.

"You don't understand," he said to his dissatisfied patient. "The large amount of alcohol which you have been drinking for so long a period has prevented the purification of the blood; we have had as much trouble to prevent your getting worse as to help

you to get better. The smallest quantity of alcohol now might produce very serious symptoms, and I would not answer for the consequences. Let us get the alcohol out of your blood; you will, then, I hope, rapidly get better. Don't be a foolish man, and upset all that we have been trying to do for you."

Others besides Dr. Chapman were trying to befriend Jack Wilson. They did not wish it to appear so, for fear all their good intentions should be upset. They worked quietly to save him from the temptation to which he was exposed, and to bring a brighter and better life into his heart.

Mr. Greenwood and Mr. Andrews often consulted on this subject.

"What can we do for the poor fellow?" asked Mr. Greenwood, for he felt more pity than anger for the drunkard; he knew that drunkenness is as much a disease as a vice. He was convinced that medical treatment and good influence would do much more good than any amount of hard words or punishment in prison.

"What shall we do for him?" Mr. Andrews replied. "Can't we manage to take him to some Home for a time where he may have opportunities of making better associates, and so starting a new life?"

"One fact is certain," said Mr. Greenwood; "we must get him away from Graystoke, if it be only for a time. Bill Bates and Job Trottman will not,

indeed, leave him alone while he is in the hospital. I believe we could make a man of him, if we could only keep the drink out of his mouth say for twelve months."

The kindly conspirators had a hard tussle with the man they wished to help. He made all manner of objections. He did not want to leave his native town. All at once he put on a pretence of being remarkably fond of his wife and children—he could not endure the thought of parting from them. He would promise to keep out of the public-house, and to drink moderately, but he could not give it up entirely.

Mr. Andrews felt a righteous indignation at this hypocrisy. He spoke out his mind in a way which completely took Jack Wilson by surprise; he saw himself pictured in a manner that he was compelled to believe himself a very wicked and ungrateful man. Mr. Andrews pointed out to him that he had long neglected his wife and family—that he had really left them to starve, and that if kind friends had not come to their assistance they would certainly have been obliged to go into the poorhouse. He pointed out also that he with others had been guilty of a criminal attack upon private property; that by such conduct these premises had caught fire, which might have resulted in death; that for such conduct, if he were prosecuted, he might be punished by several years' imprisonment. Instead of taking such measures those whom he had injured had become his bene-

factors; they had given bread to his family, and employment to his son.

The arrangement they wished to carry out was all for his good. He was to go away for at least twelve months; he was to endeavour to get the love of intoxicating drinks out of his nature; he was to promise not to drink any alcohol during that time; he was not to communicate with any of his old associates, and if communicating with any of his family he was not to inform them of his address, for fear his evil companions should become possessed of it. When he was restored to health he was to perform the work provided for him; he was cheerfully to submit to all regulations for his benefit, and to allow himself to be influenced for good.

All the time of his absence his friends at Gray-stoke would look after his wife and family. They should want for nothing; the only object they had in view was his restoration to moral and physical health.

The sick man listened to this revelation of himself in silence and shame. The proposals made he could not deny might prove for his good; he was obliged to give way to such kindly pressure.

And so it was that the wife and children said good-bye. The wife's hopes were high, for she had great faith in those who were working for her husband's good.

CHAPTER IX.

CHARLIE WILSON'S ANXIETY RELIEVED.

"His pensive cheek upon his hand reclined,
And anxious thoughts revolving in his mind."

DRYDEN.

QUIETLY, unobserved, without any commotion, the convalescent man was removed from the hospital. He was still very weak, and felt strange as he walked for the first time along the ward, supported by his crutches and the kind sisters.

Nurse Rebecca helped him into the cab, and Mr. Andrews and Mr. Greenwood went with him to his new home. No one was informed of his destination. Those who loved the sick man were not to know, for fear that those who did not love him should find out the facts. It was feared that, weak in will power as in body, he might fall back into the slough from which kind friends were trying to raise him.

There was considerable commotion among Jack Wilson's friends when they could obtain no information of his whereabouts. Bill Bates, Job Trottmann, and even Tom Tripper, the broker's man, began making

inquiries. First, Mrs. Wilson was interrogated, then Charlie, then the hospital authorities, but none knew anything; and when Bill Bates ventured to ask Mr. Andrews, he was quietly told that his old friend was making splendid progress, and that he did not at present wish to communicate with any one.

To the anxious wife Mr. Andrews said, "Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Wilson; it is all an agreement on the part of your husband and those he has injured. We promise not to prosecute him, we promise to help his wife and family, we promise to look after him, and to do our best to restore him to you in twelve months' time a changed man. He on his part promises to abstain from intoxicating drinks, not to communicate with his companions, and to carry out all our reasonable suggestions. Don't worry; your husband is well, he is happy and full of hope. You must trust Mr. Greenwood and myself, for indeed we are doing what is best for all."

Mrs. Wilson quietly submitted, but Charlie was not so easily talked over. He not only pitied his father but loved him ardently. He could remember the time before his father fell into the hands of the enemy and became a drunkard; then he was very kind, and used to take him for pleasant walks and buy him toys and books. His proud heart resented this interference with his family, and he felt like telling both Mr. Andrews and Mr. Greenwood that however kind they might have been, it was not fair to send his father

away, leaving them all in doubts as to where he was and what he was doing.

One Sunday afternoon, as he was talking the matter over with Arthur Richards, he said,—

“I tell you what it is, Arthur, I’ve a good mind to throw up my situation, and to ask your father to allow me to come and serve out the soup. Why can’t I have my father’s address, so that I may write to him; this is interfering with the liberty of the subject. We don’t live in Russia, where men can be transported to Siberia without even a trial.”

“Bravo, Charlie!” answered Arthur, “you speak like a true-born English boy, and I love you all the more for it. No matter how bad your father may have been, that’s no reason why any one should interfere between a man and his family.”

Charlie felt his temper rise with this encouragement, and said, “Why shouldn’t I know where my father is? I’m his son, and I have to work to keep the family. If Mr. Andrews is kind to me, I’m not going to be his slave, not I.”

“Then why don’t you tell him so, and let him see that you are independent,” answered Arthur, forgetting that none of us are independent of each other.

This and other conversations made Charlie’s temper wax fierce. He was just as industrious as before; no one could say that he neglected his duty, or that he was not obliging and polite. It did not, however, take a good reader of character to see that there was something

wrong. The bright, free, happy, boyish smile had passed from Charlie's open face. He hardly spoke till he was spoken to; there was a dogged, don't-care-sort-of manner about him; he was not Charlie Wilson, but somebody else with Charlie Wilson's face and body.

Mr. Andrews was not slow in observing this change. Charlie's "Good-morning, sir," was not the musical, friendly, heart-moving "good-morning" that it used to be. The boy did not come running smiling at his command. At times he could see his lips move as in anger, and a dark scowl on his face, as if a storm was brewing in that young heart. Mr. Andrews was troubled; he was deeply distressed; he felt that Charlie now regarded him as his enemy, while all the time he was trying to be his best friend.

Mr. Andrews had always been attached to lads of Charlie's age. For years he had been surrounded with them, both in the Sunday school and in the Band of Hope. They had been his companions; he seldom wanted any society but that of his dear lads. He treasured the affectionate letters they wrote to him. He loved to make them presents; there was not one in which he did not see some good quality, and to all their faults he was quite blind. Among them all Charlie Wilson was certainly his favourite. He could see that the boy had a loving, affectionate nature. He knew he had a mind capable of great development; he wanted to have the honour of training that mind. He felt the greatest pleasure in helping Charlie's

family; and now he could see he was misunderstood, and that his favourite was losing his affection for him.

When Mr. Andrews had succeeded to his father's business, and had taken to himself a wife, he hoped that he might have children of his own to love and to educate; but some five years had passed and he was still a childless man. It was not strange that a nature like that of Mr. Andrews should have experienced great pleasure when Charlie came to beg employment. It was no wonder that the day passed quicker now that his dear friend was by his side so constantly, and he had so many opportunities of showing him favour. To see Charlie sulky, and apparently full of suppressed anger, was more than Mr. Andrews could endure; no matter whatever might be the consequences, he must have the cloud of doubt and distrust removed.

So he was moved to call Charlie into his private room. Then placing his hands lovingly on the boy's shoulders, and looking into his large expressive eyes, he said,—

"There's something the matter, my dear boy—some heavy grief on your heart; you are in some trouble. You are not the bright, cheerful, laughing lad you used to be. Can you not confide in me, and trust me in this matter, for you know I desire your happiness?"

Charlie turned his eyes to the floor. He could not

restrain himself any longer. He could not keep back the tears—they flowed freely—while his heart beat rapidly with excitement.

“Now, Charlie,” continued Mr. Andrews in a coaxing tone, “you were not always so secret in your sorrows; for many a time you have told me of your troubles at home, and I have always tried to comfort you and to help you to bear your anxieties.”

“Yes, sir,” sobbed out Charlie, “that is all true. You have been more than a father to me, and I have much to be thankful for. But I love my father, sir, and I don’t think it is right for you to send him away from home, as I hear you have done.”

“That is the trouble, is it?” answered Mr. Andrews, who saw at once that Charlie was only exhibiting the feelings of a good son. “I am glad that you wish to know about your father. I must explain, and tell you the truth.”

“Thank you, sir; I only wish to know the truth about my father.”

“Now, Charlie, answer me. You would like to see your father once more a sober, kind, industrious man, as he really is when he is not under the influence of alcohol?”

“Yes, sir; I should indeed like to see him once more as he used to be before Bill Bates and Job Trotman got hold of him.”

“Then look here, Charlie; your friend Mr. Greenwood and myself have sent your father to an institution

where he will be medically treated, so that he may lose his thirst for alcohol. While he is away no one is to know his address, for fear his old companions should communicate with him."

"Is my father well and happy now, sir? Does he like the institution in which he is staying?" asked Charlie.

"You shall read his own answer to that question," said Mr. Andrews, opening his desk and taking out a bundle of letters. "Read these, my boy: the address is purposely omitted for fear the letters should fall into the hands of the enemy. You will learn here that your father is perfectly happy and determined to become a better man."

Charlie read eagerly the letters his father had addressed to Mr. Andrews. There were many expressions of great gratitude for kindnesses shown to himself and to his family; especially he referred to his noble son, and hoped he would prove a good servant to so indulgent a master. He spoke of the kind treatment he was receiving, and how he was gradually losing his appetite for alcohol; and how he looked forward with pleasure to the happy time when he should be once more united to his family.

As Charlie handed the letters back all his ill-feeling had disappeared; his face was beaming with satisfaction; his mind had lost its suspicions.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "I must ask you to forgive me for having had one evil thought about

your treatment of my father. These letters prove that you have done well."

"God bless you, Charlie," said Mr. Andrews, "and make you a blessing, as I believe He will. Have patience, pray earnestly, and your Heavenly Father will give you an earthly father worthy of the name. You shall yet learn to be proud of being the son of such a father."

Charlie went back to his work as light-hearted as he usually was. He felt like Christian when his burden rolled off at the foot of the Cross into the open sepulchre. He was obliged to sing, for his soul was full of joy and hope.

CHAPTER X.

AN UNSUCCESSFUL SEARCH.

"Thou temptest me in vain,
To tempt the thing which daily yet I rue,
And the old cause of my continued pain
With like attempts to like end to renew."

SPENSER.

WINTER held on as long as it possibly could. It had a hard struggle for existence, but the sun was too powerful for it at the last, and it had to give way. Once more the streams began to flow; the hard ground softened under the genial influence of the sun's rays; the apparently dead trees began to show signs of life; the snow disappeared even from the tops of the hills; and early in April there were seen the first signs of spring.

Charlie Wilson and his two friends, Arthur Richards and Alfred Greenwood, were obliged to hang up their skates, and they waited eagerly for the time when they would be allowed to bring out their bats and begin the glorious game of cricket.

The spring brought back prosperity to the town

of Graystoke. The strike was over. Job Trotteman and his friends had not gained much by their action; the masters were too powerful and too well-organized for the men. Besides, the general public felt that the demands of the men were unreasonable; they wanted too much their own way. The public had no sympathy with the men who spoke of their masters as having nothing to do, because they did not labour with their hands. The men had no conception of the mental toil of those who had expended large amounts of capital and many years of work in building up a business.

The net result was a great loss to each. The masters were poorer by many thousands; the men were poorer by the debts they had incurred, and by the privations they had endured. The permanent results meant that the masters had given way on some points, and the men had been obliged by sheer necessity to give way on others. Such a re-arrangement might have been brought about by a few hours' serious consultation, if both had been willing to meet each other half-way, and then how much misery and poverty might have been saved.

Mr. Richards had discontinued selling the soup, for the leaseholders of the Plough Inn had given him a gentle hint that he was lowering the value of the house by his action; and now that there was no necessity for such an addition to the ordinary trade of the publican, he was asked to discontinue

it, and to confine himself to the business for which his house was licensed.

The unhappy publican grieved very much over this warning, for day by day his conscience grew more troubled concerning his business, and he longed for some opportunity of being entirely free from it; but he had entered into certain agreements, and matters might go very seriously with him if he should break any of the covenants of his lease.

There could not be any serious objection, however, to his selling unintoxicating drinks, and of these he encouraged the sale on every opportunity. The smoking urns of tea, coffee, and cocoa appeared, therefore, on the bar alongside of the urn containing the hot water for diluting the gin and the whisky.

Some of the customers of the Plough Inn became, therefore, partly weaned from the drinking of beer, and found the cup of cocoa more nutritious and pleasant. Even Bill Bates, Job Trottman, and Tom Tripper fell into the kindly snare, and found themselves drinking cocoa, without knowing why they did so, thus proving the truth of the saying that man is a creature of imitation—a bundle of habits gained from those around us.

One evening, as this delightful trio were sitting in the taproom enjoying one another's society, and drinking at intervals various beverages intoxicating and otherwise, their conversation turned upon their missing companion, Jack Wilson.

"I say, Job," said Bill Bates, "this is a bit too rough about Jack Wilson, ain't it? They've been and taken him off somewhere, and we can't find anything about him."

Job tried to look very cunning as he replied,—

"Look here, Bill, I'm as artful as most people; though Tom does think himself mighty clever when he goes into folks' houses for the rent. Can't we three enter into a little plan to find out where he is, and to bring him back to his suffering wife and family?"

There was a loud laugh when Job said these words, for he laid a peculiar emphasis on the conclusion of the sentence: it was quite a common saying that Mrs. Wilson and her family seemed a great deal better off now her husband was away than when he was at home.

Tom Tripper looked up, and taking his pipe out of his mouth, slowly uttered the remark: "Look here, Bill Bates, and you, Job Trotteman, it isn't often as I gets a bit excited, but I'm very much interested in that Wilson family. I shan't forget how that lad paid me off handsomely, and got me out of a house where I was very uncomfortable. I tell you what it is, if you had heard how that boy talked to me, if you had heard the poor mother a-crying upstairs like a great baby, you'd be careful what you did before you brought back that Jack Wilson to make their lives miserable once more. I tell you the rent's paid regular every week, and though this may do me

out of a job, I ain't a-going to sit still and to see mischief a-brewing to hurt an honest woman and her youngsters, and especially that lad who talked to me in such a way as I've never been talked to in all my life. I'd give something to find out where he got that sovereign from so quickly."

The others laughed heartily at this speech, and then Job explained that he meant no harm to their old companion. It was only a matter of curiosity to find out if Jack was kept a prisoner against his will.

"Don't you worry yourself," he said to Tom. "I've heard it said that Jack's kept a prisoner in some teetotal asylum against his will. Now, I know that Jack writes sometimes to Mr. Andrews. I have heard this from one of his shopmen, who has recognized Jack's handwriting on the envelope. Now, if we could see the postmark on one of these letters, we might go to the place, find out the institution, watch for him, and then away with him to liberty. What say you, lads, to my little scheme? Bank Holiday's coming on, and we shall have an opportunity of carrying this out."

Tom Tripper and Bill Bates loudly applauded the scheme, though Tom said with emphasis that if any harm was to be done to Charlie Wilson or his mother he would have nothing to do with it; he would go straight to Mr. Andrews and tell him of the plot.

"You donkey," said Job, annoyed at this threat, "we're only scheming for Jack's good. Why should

he be shut up in a teetotal prison when he wants to get out and be a free man?"

To carry out this plot Job Trottman very soon began to take action.

It was not very difficult to bribe the postman to let him look at the outside of the letters addressed to Mr. Andrews, for under no circumstances would the postman allow him to take away any letter or to open one. This would have been a very serious offence, and punishable by several years of imprisonment, and the postman would not risk it.

"I don't want to get you into any trouble," said Job. "I only want to see the outside of Mr. Andrews's letters; the postmark will tell me where they comes from, and so I shall be able to find out where Jack Wilson is staying."

The postman gave way, and for several weeks Job, as often as he could meet him on his rounds, took him aside, examined the outside of the letters, and was at last rewarded for his pains.

"That's it!" shouted Job, with much glee. "I know that 'A'—that's a letter to be proud of," and so it was, for it was shaped like a Chinese pagoda, being ornamented by so many flourishes that it looked as if the writer had been trying to imitate the dragons and bells found generally on those strange erections.

"I have it! Now I shall soon be on the scent, and then good-bye to all Mr. Andrews's schemes. Canterbury—ha! ha! A nice little trip for a Bank Holiday.

We'll soon find out the institution where Jack is, and we'll have him home in the evening."

The three conspirators soon made all arrangements. They searched the directory in the local library, but found no notice of any home for drunkards. Nothing daunted, they determined on the coming Easter Monday to search the town, and to restore their friend to "liberty and beer," as they said—and shouldn't he have as much as he liked at their expense!

Bank Holiday soon arrived. For several days there was no work at the factories. The only busy man was the publican, for it must be admitted that whatever good Lord Avebury's kind Act of Parliament has done, it has certainly largely assisted the sale of intoxicating drinks.

Arrived at Canterbury, they had to quench their thirsty throats after so long and tedious a journey. To them, alas, Canterbury had no history or poetry which could awaken their imagination. They could see nothing in the great Cathedral and all the historical associations of that marvellous building—truly one of the wonders of the world! They heard no tread of pilgrims' feet, or remembered Chaucer's quaint stories. So much had drink debased and degraded them that they wanted to know nothing and to see nothing but the inside of a pint pot filled with beer, and unfortunately at Canterbury they found plenty of public-houses where they could gratify their desires.

They did not, however, entirely forget the object of their visit. They inquired in every direction for some home where "drunkards were made sober," as Tom expressed it, but could find no such institution; and at last they were obliged to return home, weary with walking and empty in pocket, for they had spent freely, as most working men do when they go out to "enjoy themselves," as they call eating and drinking the food of a week in the hours of a day.

The trio had no suspicion that shrewd Mr. Andrews had anticipated their conspiracy, and had given instructions that all Jack Wilson's letters should be posted at Canterbury, which was some miles away from the place where he was really living.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HOME OF REST.

“Sir, you are welcome to our house :
It must appear in other ways than words,
Therefore I scant this breathing courtsey.”

SHAKESPEARE.

DURING the time that Bill Bates and Job Trottnan were troubling themselves to find Jack Wilson, and were full of evil desire to lead him still further into the path of temptation, Jack was himself growing daily more grateful that he was free from his late companions, and that he could see a fair prospect of becoming once more a sober, respectable member of society.

If you know the little village of Millford on the south coast, you must certainly be acquainted with the only large and substantial building in the place ; for besides the Home to which Mr. Andrews had sent Jack Wilson there were only a few poor cottages, a dozen or so respectable houses, chiefly of retired tradesmen, and a few small shops which sold everything, and were generally out of any article you might want to purchase.

The home, known as the Home of Rest, was a fine red-brick building. It looked at you kindly, and smiled so prettily, as if to say, "Poor tired one, weary of life's trials and burdens, this is the place where you can find rest for body and brain. Come inside and forget your troubles; come and taste of the good things we have provided for you."

The home had been erected by a Mr. Richard Masterman, a gentleman who had suffered in his youth, both in body and in mind, from the intemperance of his parents. After a long absence in the colonies he had returned to England with an ample fortune, and with a determination to do for the poor drunkard what no one had attempted to do for his parents. He sought to save the drunkard, not by fines and imprisonment, but by kind treatment, medical assistance, and by giving him such moral help as should make him a new man, under the Divine help from a kind Heavenly Father, who desireth that not one of His children should perish—no, not even the drunkard.

Mr. Masterman's idea in building the home was that there should be no association of intemperance about it. He would not label it on the four walls with a big notice that it was a place of reform for drunkards, thus at once stamping as inebriates all who resided within its walls. It was to be a place of rest—a rest from temptation, trial, and sorrow—a place to build up a man, and to send

him forth a warrior prepared to fight life's battles afresh.

When a visitor arrived at the Home of Rest, he found a comfortable sleeping-apartment provided for him, for Mr. Masterman disliked the barrack system. He wished his visitors to feel at home, and that their rest should not be disturbed by the undesired conversation of others. There were cosy sitting-rooms, quiet studies with books of all kinds to read, a workshop for those inclined to be mechanical, and a room for games, where the men could talk and play as much as they liked.

The dining-hall, and in fact all the apartments, were wonderfully cheerful. Strangers who came to have a look round admired the pictures on the walls, the curtains hanging at the windows, and the many green plants which were found in every direction.

Mr. Masterman had collected many curiosities in the course of his travels both on the Continent and in the colonies, and with these he had decorated the walls, and furnished the entrance-hall and the corridors. Thus a stuffed bear, standing on its hind legs, looked at you as you entered; a man in armour stood at the door of the dining-hall; stags' heads were seen in many parts of the building; in fact, it was impossible to turn in any direction without looking at something which was of real interest and instruction.

When Jack Wilson arrived at the nearest railway

station, which was certainly three miles from the Home, he was fairly taken by surprise to see a carriage and pair waiting for him; and still more astonished when a kindly gentleman took him by the hand and helped him into the carriage, giving him the best seat, and trying in every way to administer to his comfort and happiness.

"You have had a pleasant journey down, I hope," said the kindly-faced gentleman. "Now make yourself comfortable, and try to feel at home. Don't be shy in talking; be free and easy, and you will soon find how very pleasant your life will be."

"Thank you, sir," said Jack; "I am very comfortable, and my journey has been quite pleasant."

"Now look here," said his new friend, "don't 'sir' me or any one else at the Home. We are all brothers there. We live to make one another happy, and to be kind to one another. I am Brother Richard, and you are Brother Wilson, and no more."

Jack didn't like to ask to whom he was speaking. The fact is, it would have quite overpowered him had he known it was Mr. Masterman himself who had come to meet him and to give him a warm reception. It was one of Mr. Masterman's peculiarities that he liked to live with his brethren at the Home. He wanted to share in the pleasure of doing good. He had often been heard to say,—

"What's the good of spending half one's savings in building an institution and having hired persons

to superintend it and get all the pleasure out of it? No, certainly not; I will live at the Home and see all my visitors, and by mingling with them make them feel that I am their brother, and that I truly desire their happiness."

Jack had been provided with clothing by his kind friend, Mr. Greenwood; so that, being a really handsome man, he did not look like a common workman when he entered the Home.

Mr. Masterman, having introduced him to the matron, left him to be taken to his apartment, where he said he would find everything provided so that he might rest comfortably until he should be strong enough to go about without crutches.

"Rest here awhile, Brother Wilson," said the matron, "and I will send you some refreshment. You may stay here quietly all the day if you wish. To-morrow you may be able to go round the house and out into the grounds."

Jack began to think himself in fairyland when a smiling maid brought him a tray loaded with good things to eat, and recommended him to try the milk she had brought, at the same time advising him to add a little soda-water to make it lighter and more digestible.

When Jack drew the curtains on one side and looked out of the window, he was quite overcome with the beauty of a scene he had never before witnessed.

Only a short distance away rolled the grand old

sea. He could hear it splashing against the cliffs; he could see the crested waves racing each other; he could distinguish the peculiar note of the sea-gulls, though it puzzled him somewhat at first. There was a charming peacefulness all around. Only a very few persons were on the sands. There were only a couple of rowing-boats pulled up on the shore, and a small yacht with its white sails spread out to the breeze.

Jack was entranced; all this was so new to him. He had certainly been once to the seaside—that was only an excursion to Southend on a Bank Holiday. As it rained nearly all the day, he spent most of his time in the public-house; and all he could remember was coming home late at night, shouting himself hoarse during the journey, and the splitting headache he had the next morning.

He had finished his luncheon, and had brought his easy-chair close to the window, so that while resting his weak limbs he could have a full view of the waves, when a knock at the door startled him, and then a gentle footstep entered his room.

“Well, Brother Wilson,” said Mr. Masterman, “will you read this little promise which we ask all visitors to the Home to make on entering?”—and he drew from his pocket a slip of printed paper on which were printed the following words:—

“Dear brother, you have come to the Home for rest and help; will you promise on your honour as a man that you will not drink any intoxicating

drinks when outside the Home, nor bring any inside, and will you promise to ask your Heavenly Father to give you strength to overcome the drink habit?"

Jack read the paper through several times. He was so impressed with the kindness he had already received that he did not hesitate a moment. A vision of his wife and family rose up before him. He replied with a firmness of voice that showed that he intended to carry out his promise.

"Yes, yes, I will make this promise, God helping me to carry it through."

"Don't worry about those at home," said Mr. Masterman; "all will be well. They will be well provided for. In time you will go back, I trust, a true husband and a noble father. God bless you!"

They shook hands and parted.

This was the little interview that Mr. Masterman usually had with each of his guests. He always came away from such interviews with feelings of great joy. He never felt happier than when he was helping some fallen brother to get on to the first round of the ladder towards heaven once more.

CHAPTER XII.

PROMOTION.

"'Tis not in mortals to command success ;
But we'll do more, Sempronius—we'll deserve it."

ADDISON.

WHY was Charlie Wilson walking along the High Street of Graystoke with his head so erect, and his face beaming with such smiles that it seemed to shed veritable sunshine on the pathway of that lovely spring morning? Why was he humming such a merry tune, and tripping along with such a light footstep, that a passer-by would never have believed that a single care rested upon that young heart, or that ever a trouble had rested upon that sweet young face?

Charlie looked all that a lad of his age ought to look. His cap was pushed back over his forehead; a mass of curly light hair showed itself over his laughing eyes; his dress was neat and fitted him extremely well; he was certainly in the best of health and spirits, and on good terms with himself.

We shall soon find out the cause of his happiness if we listen to his conversation with his mother.

"Mother, dear," he said, throwing his arms around his mother's neck—"mother, I am a made man. Mr. Andrews has promoted me, and I could not rest till I had come home to tell you."

Cissie and Jessie, who had just come home from school, clapped their hands, though they did not quite understand the cause of all this joy. That there was something to be glad about was quite certain, for mother's face had lost its usual sorrowful look, and she was smiling and kissing Charlie.

"Well, well, tell me all about it," she said; "and be quick about it too, for the dinner will be done in a few minutes, and I must dish it up."

"Would you believe it, mother? I am to help Mr. Andrews in the counting-house. I'm to write orders, examine invoices, make out accounts, write letters, and to be a gentleman. No more cleaning brass plates with oily rags, or running errands, or sweeping floors. I'm to be a gentleman!"

"Gentlemen have plenty of money," said Cissie quietly.

"Yes, and that's the best of it all; I shall be able to help you, mother. I can hardly believe it. Mr. Andrews told me this morning that my salary in the future is to be fifteen shillings a week."

"What a kind, liberal master!" answered Mrs. Wilson. "Why, Charlie, you've stepped into a fortune."

"Mr. Andrews told me I deserved it, because I

brought the fire-engine to frighten the strikers when they attacked his shop. Besides, he said I was getting a big lad, and I must have some money for clothes."

"And you shall have it, my darling; for what with the help I get from Mr. Greenwood and Mr. Andrews, I shall not want much of the money from you, Charlie."

"You shall have it all but two shillings; that's all I want for my pocket and my clothes. Why, if I had a mint of gold, you should have it, mother; so don't fret any more. The money is for you, and you shall spend it as you like."

That morning was indeed a memorable one in the history of Charlie Wilson. He had always been ambitious, and when at school had applied himself carefully to his lessons, with the determination that some day he would be at the head of whatever business he should be engaged in. And now the first step towards the realization of that hope had become a fact; for in the counting-house he would be released from the mere physical drudgery of the work of a porter—he would be able to exercise his brain. He would learn all the secrets of his business; and, who could tell? he might become a partner; and then, what would he not be able to do for his dear mother?

The pleasure was not all Charlie's; it was as much, if not even more, his employer's. Mr. Andrews

now realized the truth of the words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Mr. Andrews, as the reader already knows, positively loved Charlie; and although he did not like to confess it, nor did he think it right to endeavour to win Charlie's affection away from his parents, yet he experienced the greatest delight in doing anything to make the boy happy.

Charlie returned to his business, and took up his seat in the counting-house as if he had been used to it all his life.

There was a circular to be sent out to the regular customers, stating that a consignment of real Irish hams had arrived and were offered at a reasonable figure; there were bills to be made out, and telegrams to dispatch for goods wanted immediately. Charlie found himself so pleasantly occupied that he could scarcely believe that the hour of six had arrived, and that he was free till the hour of nine next morning.

"Well, Charlie," said Mr. Andrews, as the clock was striking six and Charlie was clearing up, "how does your watch go—the watch that Santa Claus or Father Christmas brought you on Christmas Eve?"

"Or somebody else, whose name I will not mention," answered Charlie.

"Well, never mind about names," answered Mr. Andrews, pleased at the boy's reply. "I should like to look at the watch; let's look at it."

He stepped forward and gently lifted the chain.

There was no watch ; only a key was fastened to the end of the chain, just heavy enough to keep it from falling out.

Charlie blushed, and Mr. Andrews pretended to look astonished.

"What, Charlie, you have lost your watch," he said, "and you have never told me about it!"

"Indeed, sir," stammered Charlie, "I have not lost it, but I have parted with it for a good purpose ; and I hope soon, through your kindness, to have it back in my possession."

"So you did, Charlie," replied Mr. Andrews, patting Charlie's curly hair. "It was a noble act. I have heard all about it, and I am proud of you. You shall have it back at once. Here, take off the key and give me the chain."

Charlie's hand trembled as he handed the chain to his master. In a minute more the watch was on the swivel and ticking in Charlie's pocket.

"Thank you, sir ; thank you," said Charlie, nearly crying with excitement. "I hope you do not think it was want of respect for the giver that caused me to part with the watch?"

"I know the cause, Charlie. You would have been quite right to have parted with any gift for such a dear, good mother as you have."

"Thank you, sir—thank you for speaking so kindly of my mother. There never was, I believe, a better mother in this wide world."

Charlie was full of delight as he hurried home that evening. He could not resist the temptation to continually take the watch out of his pocket and to look at it again and again. Yes, it was the same watch that good Santa Claus had brought him on Christmas Eve; and now that Mr. Andrews had been the means of his having it back in his possession, there was no doubt who that good fairy was.

His mother had often thought that the watch was not in Charlie's pocket, and now and then she had made a gentle inquiry as to what had become of it; but to all her words he would simply answer, "You wait awhile, mother, and you'll find out all in good time."

But now that the watch was once more in his pocket, he would not keep the secret back any longer; his mother should know how he had paid off the broker's man.

It was supper-time; the children had gone to bed, and Charlie was alone with his mother. The church clock chimed the hour of nine, and Charlie, without thinking what he was doing, pulled out his watch to see if it agreed with the hour that was striking.

Mrs. Wilson looked surprised; a smile of satisfaction lit up her face.

"So the watch has come back, Charlie, has it? I have often wondered where it has been all this time."

"Well, mother, you shall wonder no more;" and

then he told her the whole story of how he paid off the broker's man with the money the good pawnbroker had lent him, and of Mr. Andrews's kindness in getting back the watch, and how happy he was. No wonder there was moisture in his mother's eyes, and that Charlie had an extra kiss when he said good-night.

That night was a night of happy dreams both to mother and son. There seemed to be a ray of bright hope dawning in each heart; and both of them, unknown to each other, felt that there was a time of peace and happiness coming—a time when they would all be united once more—and that the sweetness of the coming life would more than make up for all the sorrow they had suffered.

Mrs. Wilson had received much information from Mr. Andrews concerning her husband's welfare, but up to the present she had received no letter directly from him. What she had learned had all been in his favour. In her sleeping vision on this night she saw him once more restored to his former self—the same noble man as she had known him in the days of their courtship. She heard him speaking to her in the same endearing tones. He was again like the man out of whom the Great Master cast the evil spirit—he was again clothed and in his right mind. With these hopes exalting her heart to thankfulness, she was singing at her usual duties when her song was interrupted by the postman's knock.

Cissie hastened to respond, and brought to her mother a letter. The handwriting on the envelope made her heart tremble; it was the same neat little hand which she had admired so much in the days of the past.

Her hand shook as she opened the envelope. Yes, it was from her husband; and the envelope contained not only a letter from him, but a portrait to show her how he had greatly improved.

"That's not dada," said Cissie; "that's a gentleman."

Cissie had never known her father as anything but a working man without any decent clothing, and often very silly with drink.

"Don't say that, Cissie," said the happy mother; "father is a gentleman now. He is coming back to make us all happy. My dear children, there are happy days coming for us all."

There was indeed reason for rejoicing. The portrait showed the father with a face beaming with intelligence and love. He was young again; the old sad, dissipated look had gone. Surely of such a father they might all be proud. Was it any wonder that Charlie walked aside and kissed the portrait, and coming back kissed his mother? Their tears mingled, but their hearts were full of joy.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FLOOD.

“Confusion dwelt in ev’ry face,
And fear in ev’ry heart,
When waves on waves, and gulphs in gulphs,
O’ercame the pilot’s art.”—*Spectator*.

THE summer came at last. The birds sang their sweetest songs; the insects lived their short lives; the cattle in the fields enjoyed the sunshine as they munched the grass and chewed the cud. There were sounds of laughter on the river’s banks as the merry bathers plunged into the water; and on the cricket ground rounds of applause as some batsman made a good hit, or some bowler made the stumps rattle together to tell the tale that the ball had gained its point.

But all too soon the happy summer evenings became shorter, autumn came on, the leaves changed colour. The creepers on the wall, decorating the entrance-porch to the houses, presented the most charming picture of light and shade. The leaves fell; signs of winter were evident on every hand. Again the frost glittered on the hedges, every leaf

being decorated with diamonds more beautiful than any that ever sparkled on the head of queen or duchess.

At Millford the residents at the Home of Rest had passed a delightful summer. Jack Wilson had gained perfect strength, and now felt better in health than he had done for many years. The months had not passed in idleness, for though recreation was an important item in Mr. Masterman's plan for destroying the drink crave, work, especially in the open air, held also an important place. Since Brother Wilson, as Mr. Masterman always addressed Jack, had shown a taste for gardening, he was encouraged to work in the vegetable and also in the flower garden. He became quite an expert. He learnt all about the rotation of crops, and became deeply interested in the association of bees and the flowering of plants. The brain, free from the influence of alcohol, had now an opportunity for culture, and thus a thirst for knowledge took the place of a thirst for beer. A new life dawned on the unhappy man. When it was too dark or too wet for gardening, he found pleasure in books—the best and safest of all companions—and thus higher aspirations and nobler thoughts occupied his mind.

Under the influence of Mr. Masterman, Jack Wilson was rapidly becoming a new man. In his conversations with his kind host he had already confessed his folly in believing that there was any real happi-

ness or physical strength to be found in the use of intoxicating drinks.

"I see I have been acting under a delusion," he said one day to Mr. Masterman. "I used to believe that beer contained nourishment, and I fancied that I gained good from drinking it."

"That is a very common superstition," replied Mr. Masterman, "and it is so deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, that it will take many years of teaching to eradicate it. If the drinkers would only consider the methods carried out in the manufacture of intoxicating drinks, they would see at once that the object of the brewer and the distiller is to make an intoxicating and not a nourishing drink. They succeed very well in that object, but the stimulation provided by the alcohol causes the drinkers to mistake the quicker beating of the heart and the quicker flowing of the blood for a supply of strength."

"I am beginning to see that now," replied Jack Wilson; "it is a revelation to me. I have proved since I have been at the Home that milk is the best drink and alcohol the worst."

While Mr. Masterman made it a duty to educate his guests in the true nature of alcohol, he relied more on the cultivation of the spirit of reliance on a higher Power; and although he knew that the Divine Spirit seldom works in an intellect dulled and made stupid by alcohol, yet prayer was a most essential part of the drunkard's cure, and without

it temptation could not be met with any hope of victory.

Mr. Masterman had made a study of the powers of medicine to kill the appetite for alcohol. He knew all about the methods of cure carried out in various countries. He knew the German method of allowing the patient to become disgusted with alcohol, by mixing it freely with his daily food; he knew the gold cure, and the cold water cure. He believed in none of them. He knew that under certain conditions of the body the power of alcohol grows stronger. He knew that by keeping the body in good health, by supplying it with natural foods, by constant ablutions in cold water, and by the aid of simple tonics, much could be done to strengthen the will to overcome the drink habit, and it was his earnest desire to encourage every natural method that would enable the drunkard to cultivate self-control; but spiritual power stood at the top of Mr. Masterman's list of cures.

The information that he sent from time to time as to the progress of Jack Wilson's recovery gave great delight to Mr. Andrews and Mr. Greenwood. They rejoiced also at the progress that the temperance movement was making in Graystoke. At a mission they had organized, Job Trotteman and Tom Tripper had come forward and signed the pledge; and, strange to say, contrary to all expectations, they had actually kept it, and were now trying to persuade Bill Bates to follow their example. Much of this success was

certainly to be attributed to the continued practice of Mr. Richards to encourage the sale of unintoxicating drinks at the Plough Inn, though this involved him in constant disputes with his landlord.

Graystoke was prosperous once more, but in the midst of this an event occurred which produced a large amount of misery and not a little temporary poverty.

It was just after Christmas that a gale blew across the Atlantic, causing fearful havoc among the shipping, and doing fearful damage along the coast. At some of the popular summer resorts the piers were greatly injured, buildings near the sea were blown down, the silver sands were strewn with wreckage, and immense masses of cliff were hurled into the sea by the force of the waves. The power of the wind was not limited to the seashore. Inland, considerable damage was also done. Roofs were robbed of their slates, trees were uprooted in the parks, and such was the violence of the wind that some pedestrians were actually blown into the river in the very sight of the Plough Inn.

But for those at Graystoke the worst was to come; and coming as it did in a most unexpected manner, no one was prepared to meet it.

The river at Graystoke was broad, and its banks were low. Many of the older inhabitants could remember the overflowing of the river, but this had only produced a little inconvenient excitement.

A flood was now at hand which, if the inhabitants could but have apprehended its severity, would have created the greatest alarm. On this occasion the wind blew so fiercely at the mouth of the river that an immense volume of water was blown into the river, and this so increased its volume that there was no place for it to go but to overspread its banks, and make its way into the lower parts of the town.

It was near midnight. The Plough Inn was closed. Arthur Richards had gone to rest, but was aroused by the unusual violence of the wind. Getting out of bed, and looking out of the window, he was highly amused with the extraordinary movements of the sign-board, which was swinging backwards and forwards in the most frantic manner. His amusement soon changed to alarm when he noticed that the river was overflowing its banks and was rapidly spreading over the path. Opening his room door the boy shouted,—

“Father, father, the river is rising! we shall be flooded!”

Mr. Richards, who was sitting at supper with his wife, received the message with disbelief. Opening the private door he soon discovered that Arthur was right, for the water poured into the house rapidly and very soon filled the cellars.

For a moment Mr. Richards stood dumbfounded with alarm, but rapidly the thought crossed his mind that, as most of the inhabitants were asleep

in their beds, if they were not aroused some of them would most certainly be drowned.

Bidding his wife see that Arthur remained with her and the servants on the top floor, he determined to get to a boat which was moored not far off, and in this to make his way along the town, and so alarm the inhabitants of their peril.

"Father, do let me go with you," shouted Arthur.

"You had better stay with your mother," was the reply.

"Mother," entreated Arthur, "do you think you can spare me? I may be of some use to father. I don't think the water will come any higher."

"Yes, you may go; but do what your father tells you. Don't go rushing into danger."

Arthur soon had on his clothes, and after kissing his mother most affectionately, jumped into the boat, which Mr. Richards had fetched by wading through the water. The tide rose higher, and the boat floated easily, for there were at least four feet of water against the houses. It was pouring down the gratings and making its way under the street doors, and yet no one seemed to be aware of the danger.

Mrs. Richards thought of the policeman's whistle and rattle, which were hanging up by the side of the bed, and these she used so effectively that in a few minutes windows were opened, policemen and firemen were aroused, and these soon hurried in boats to the rescue of those in danger.

Mr. Richards rowed the boat along some of the flooded streets, while Arthur, standing up, knocked at the doors and aroused the sleeping inhabitants. It was exciting work, and Arthur had never experienced the like in all his life.

"Father, I wonder if the Wilsons are safe?" said Arthur, for in the midst of all the excitement he could not forget his dear friend Charlie.

"Well, suppose we hurry there at once," answered Mr. Richards.

"Yes, father, at once. Hurry with all your might. I have just remembered that Charlie sleeps in the back parlour; he may be in great danger."

Mr. Richards pulled with all his might, and soon discovered that his help was greatly needed; for though Charlie was not in actual danger of death, he was in a most dangerous position.

The water had made its way into his room while he was asleep. He had been aroused by a policeman, and had only had time to slip on a few clothes and to get out on the window sill; and there he stood shivering in the wind when Mr. Richards came up.

"Jump in, Charlie," shouted Arthur. "Come along, you shall come home to our house. Are your mother and the girls safe?"

"Yes, yes, we're all safe," shouted Mrs. Wilson from the first floor window. "Don't be afraid, Charlie; jump into the boat."

Charlie was soon seated in the boat, and in a few

minutes was lying in a warm bed in the Plough Inn.

All that night Mr. Richards and Arthur were at work, and not a few lives were actually saved by their efforts. The flood made terrible havoc, for what the water did not destroy it injured by the sediment of filth it left behind, besides the sickness which was sure to arise from the damp.

In the cellars of the Plough Inn the barrels of beer were knocking against one another. Some of them were even broken asunder, and their contents mingled with the water of the river.

The morning broke to find a town full of sorrow. Many a home had been seriously injured; many a delicate woman and child had been terribly frightened; but fortunately not a life had been lost.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NOBLE SUGGESTION.

“Encourage such innocent amusements as may disembitter the minds of men, and make them mutually rejoice in the same agreeable satisfaction.”—ADDISON.

NEVER before in the history of Graystoke had there been such devastation as was now witnessed in the street near the river of that unhappy town. The lower rooms of many houses were coated with a layer of filthy river mud; the furniture and carpets were injured, in some cases damaged beyond repair; the houses were rendered damp and unhealthy, and already not a few persons were attacked by influenza and other complaints. Mr. Andrews and Mr. Greenwood, living on higher ground, had escaped. They were deeply thankful, and their hearts were filled with sympathy for the unhappy sufferers. They required no prompting to take measures for instant relief; they set to work energetically to provide suitable homes and sustenance especially for the young and the aged.

The London newspapers devoted much of their valuable space to the catastrophe; but the local papers,

knowing more of the details of the flood, were loud in their praises of the presence of mind and brave conduct of Mr. Richards of the Plough Inn. The *Graystoke Advertiser* seemed to make a hero of the energetic publican. In the course of its account of the flood, it said :—

“We must not forget to mention the part taken by Mr. Richards, the proprietor of the Plough Inn, in the efforts made to save life and property. It was, we believe, his son Arthur who first directed the attention of his father to the coming calamity. These two gave the alarm to the neighbourhood, and at the peril of their lives went forth in the night in a boat not suited for such service, and arousing the sleeping inhabitants saved many lives. In his anxiety to save others Mr. Richards had forgotten his own business, consequently the contents of the cellars of the Plough Inn have suffered considerably, and altogether there has been a great loss. Mr. Richards finds his well-conducted house almost a wreck; the neat parlour and the bar have been considerably damaged; and Mr. Richards finds himself greatly embarrassed by the destruction of his property. We hope that a grateful public will not forget to recompense a man who has done so much to protect the lives and property of others.”

Mr. Andrews had long experienced a very kindly feeling towards Mr. Richards. That feeling was greatly increased when he learned that his dear Charlie had

been rescued from peril, and possibly from death, by the forethought and energy of the publican; and he was stimulated to action by the thought of what might have happened if Mr. Richards had been less unselfish.

"Charlie, my dear boy," said Mr. Andrews when next he and Charlie Wilson met, "I need hardly tell you how delighted I am to find that you are well and unharmed by the flood. Something must be done for Mr. Richards, who really saved your life. You know more of him than I do. Can you tell me what would be the best action for his good?"

Charlie looked thoughtful, but replied without hesitation,—

"If you could help Mr. Richards, sir, to get free from the public-house trade, you would do him a kindness for which he would be ever grateful; that is what he wants most of all."

"I have heard as much, Charlie, but that means buying up the brewers to whom he is under obligations; and even then we should only leave the Plough Inn to be carried on by some one who would be more anxious to get the working-man's money than Mr. Richards."

"But I haven't told you all that is in my mind, sir," answered Charlie.

"Then speak out freely, for I am anxious to know what is the best to be done."

"You know, sir, how more than twelve months ago, in the taproom of the Plough Inn, I made my first

temperance speech. It was on Christmas Eve—you remember it, sir, don't you ? ” and Charlie took out his watch as a reminder of that happy event.

“ Well,” interrupted Mr. Andrews, “ I was told of that ; and I have sometimes wondered whether you would turn out to be a true prophet. Go on now, and tell me all that you have in your mind.”

“ Then, sir, if you have heard the truth, you have heard that in my little speech I said that I hoped that some day the Plough Inn would become a mission hall, and that I should have the pleasure of making a speech on its platform.”

“ And I hope you will ! I hope you will ! ” said Mr. Andrews, getting quite excited ; “ but I can't understand how this is to come about. How do you think it could be managed ? ”

“ Well you see, sir, I have been talking this matter over with Mr. Richards's son Arthur, and I learn that the brewers are liable for the large amount of damage done to the Plough Inn. Now, if the brewers could be saved this expense, they would probably let Mr. Richards go free.”

“ Well, suppose they did, what should we do with Mr. Richards and the Plough Inn ? ”

“ Why, make it into a temperance club and mission hall, and let Mr. Richards be the manager. I know he has been an abstainer for some months, and he would be delighted to work in his house on temperance lines.”

"Thank you, Charlie; thank you. I will think the matter over. You have put a number of new ideas into my head."

On that day Mr. Andrews was very busy. He spent some time in his counting-house making notes in his pocket-book; then he hurried away to a conference with Mr. Richards, then to Mr. Greenwood; and then he wrote a long letter to Mr. Wilson—for, since Jack Wilson is now a reformed man, he is entitled to a handle to his name.

Mr. Andrews seemed to be working at one idea. There was a determined look on his face. A glance at a page of his letter to Mr. Wilson will explain what was in his thoughts. Here it is:—

"Your twelve months' rest from temptation is now nearly over; you will soon be at liberty to return to your family. I am glad to hear that you have benefited so much in health by your stay at the Home of Rest. Mr. Masterman informs me that you have become quite strong; that you have been working hard in the garden; and that, what is better than mere physical strength, you have, he believes, power of will and self-control."

"I have a proposition to make to you which, if it meets with your approval, will, I believe, be for the good of all."

"You know, of course, all about the flood, and the noble manner in which Mr. Richards of the Plough Inn saved the life of your son. You know that much

damage has been done to the Plough Inn. Now, it has been suggested that instead of repairing the public-house to make it once more a place for the sale of intoxicating drinks, we should repair it in such a way that it may become a temperance club and mission hall, Mr. Richards to be the manager and you to work under him.

"To come back to labour in a cause that may reform some of your old companions would be a glorious finish to all your trials. Please consult Mr. Masterman on this matter, and let me know what you think. I shall indeed be proud if you see your way to undertake this task. Think and pray about it, and let me know soon your opinion."

The reception of this letter gave unspeakable joy to the one to whom it was addressed. He had been looking forward with dread to the time when he would have to meet his old companions. Strong though he felt himself, and knowing that the thirst for drink had certainly died out, he knew that while the spirit was often willing the flesh was weak; and he feared the possibility that he might fall away once more. If he had to go back to his old workshop, if he had to pass the Plough Inn, if he had to endure the sneers of Bill Bates and the temptations of Job Trotman, how should he stand then? To go back to an employment where all the surroundings would be free from alcohol, to be able to labour in a new atmosphere, and generally to be intellectually as well as physically

employed, this was an opportunity he had never expected. How could he but at once heartily and thankfully express his willingness to do his best, and to be ever grateful to those who had planned this good for him ?

Mr. Andrews was not a man to let a good idea slip through his fingers. He had many friends in the town. A subscription list was opened ; and he, having headed it with a considerable sum, was soon able to get a sufficient amount promised to enable the Plough Inn to be so altered and improved that it might become a place of education and amusement for all the working people of Graystoke.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PROPHECY FULFILLED.

“The talent of success is nothing more than doing what you can do well, and doing well whatever you can do without a thought of fame. If it comes at all, it will come because it is deserved, not because it is sought after.”—LONGFELLOW.

THE general public at Graystoke took very little interest in the conversion of the Plough Inn into a temperance centre for social intercourse and Christian work. Some, as they passed and read the announcements proclaiming the coming event, sneered, and declared that it was money thrown away; others said that one public-house less would only bring more trade to the others. But those who were working for this end believed that if the working classes were to be weaned from the drink-shops, some provision must be made for their entertainment—that there must be some place provided where they could meet and enjoy those innocent amusements which common sense demanded; and at the same time where they could have such educational and religious influences as would strengthen them to

bear bravely the trials of life, and fit them for a higher and nobler sphere hereafter.

Mr. Andrews and Mr. Greenwood were often in conference, for there were many arrangements to make; and Mr. Andrews had to be the guiding star of the committee that had been formed to superintend the new venture.

'Let us do this work ourselves,' he said. "We don't require the patronage of any great man from London, with a high-sounding name and big titles. We have carried out the work till now; let us make it a success by our own efforts."

"But we must have an opening night, and create a little excitement, so as to draw attention to the work. We must have a bold advertisement at first," answered Mr. Greenwood.

This was soon arranged. All the temperance societies in the district were to be massed; with banners and bands they were to march in procession; and Mr. Wilson was to meet them at the railway station, and riding through the town with Mr. Andrews was to show that he had now become quite free from his old habits, and was prepared to fight shoulder to shoulder with the temperance men.

There was sadness mingled with the joy which Mr. Wilson experienced at his parting with Mr. Masterman and all the kind friends he had made at the Home of Rest. Mr. Wilson had now a feeling he had seldom, if ever, realized before. He was full of

hope; he felt himself strong in body, he felt himself strong in mind. He felt that, now the thirst for intoxicating drinks had abated, he could meet temptation with a brave heart; and that holding on to the Divine Hand, he would be able to be of some service for good, as he had formerly been of service for evil.

"Thank you, thank you, Mr. Masterman," said Mr. Wilson at their private interview. "I shall never be able to thank you enough for all your loving friendship, and for all you have done for me. I often think what might have happened to me if I had been sent to prison for my folly, and had become sin-hardened. I tremble at the idea at what might possibly have been my fate."

"Dear brother," answered Mr. Masterman—tears were in his eyes; he was much moved—"I believe that drunkenness is often as much a disease as a crime, and my object in establishing this Home of Rest is to show men how to fight against themselves, and to give them power to become good men, and thus to redeem the past. Go home to your wife and family, and show by your love and devotion that you will help them to forget what they have suffered. Work hard in your new employment; seek to improve your mental faculties; seek to make your life a noble one. You are now in the prime of manhood; may God grant you many years to labour in His cause! Good-bye; and may God bless you and your family!"

When Mr. Wilson arrived, his eyes first fell on his

wife, who was waiting with Bessie and Cissie and Charlie to receive him. To say that the wife did not know her husband and that the children did not know their father would be untrue; but there is no exaggeration in the statement that they were greatly astonished at the changed appearance of the man they had come to meet. The man they had known twelve months ago was dirty in dress and features, and his face bore the drunkard's mark. That man they had feared to meet, for his voice often expressed cruel words, his hands often dealt hard blows. Now he was a man—a gentleman neatly dressed, his stalwart figure setting off his clothes to the best advantage. His eyes beamed with love and gratitude, but the memory of his former life clung to him like a bad dream. He could not forget what he had done, and how much he had embittered the lives of those who were now waiting to receive him. He hung his head down, as if ashamed to look into his wife's eyes; but she quickly set him at his ease by her loving reception.

"I am so glad to see you," said Charlie. And so said they all.

"You will forgive me, Lucy," said Mr. Wilson.

"I have done that long ago," she replied. "We must forget the past; let us live for the future."

Mr. Andrews, who had been waiting in the background, and like a true gentleman would not interfere in the touching scene, now appeared and heartily

welcomed Mr. Wilson, and led him to a seat in a carriage in which were Mr. Greenwood and Mr. Richards.

Outside the station there was considerable excitement. The members of the various Good Templar and Rechabite Lodges had assembled in good numbers. Banners were waving and bands playing. A great crowd had collected, and Graystoke was enjoying a sight it had not witnessed on any occasion before.

When the Plough Temperance Inn (for so was the name now on the sign-post) was reached, Mr. Wilson found himself surrounded by a host of friends, who had come to take part in the festival to celebrate the opening of the temperance public-house. All the public rooms of the Plough Temperance Inn were crowded with a happy throng, enjoying the innocent cup that cheers without intoxicating; and in the evening the large iron building, which had been erected by the side of the inn, was unpleasantly crowded. Many had come out of real sympathy with the object in view, and not a few simply out of curiosity.

Bill Bates, Job Trotman, and Tom Tripper were there; Dick the barman was there, putting people into their places; Nurse Rebecca and Dr. Chapman were on the platform; Mr. Andrews was in his right place in the chair; whilst Mr. Greenwood sat on his right and Mr. Wilson on his left. Mr. Richards was very busy superintending everybody.

"Look at him," said Bill Bates, referring to his old friend Jack Wilson—"look at him. Why, he's as smart as Mr. Andrews; he looks like a gentleman. There's something in being a teetotaller after all."

"I should think there is," answered Tom Tripper. "I'm all the better since I gave up drinking, though I never drank much at any time. Where is that young Charlie Wilson? I never shall forget how that boy spoke to me that night when I was put into his house for the rent, and how glad he was when he paid me off. I wonder wherever he got the money from?"

"Well, this is a rum go," chimed in Job Trottmann. "There doesn't look much like a strike here. This is a capital place to spend one's evenings. I say, Bill, look here, why don't you join us? Tom and I have already got a little money in the bank since we signed."

"Right you are," said Bill; "we'll celebrate the opening of the temperance Plough Inn by seeing my name in the pledge-book. Come along; let's do the deed before the meeting begins." And so he did.

The speeches of the evening, if not noted for eloquence, were certainly full of enthusiasm.

Mr. Andrews explained how it had come about that the Plough Inn had become a place of temperance, social, and religious work; he introduced Mr. Richards as one who would continue the management

on the new lines; he gave credit to Charlie for having made the suggestion that the Plough Inn should start afresh on a new and better footing. Mr. Greenwood had a word of encouragement to give, and Mr. Wilson explained his experience at the Home of Rest, and expressed his determination to do his best to make the new undertaking a great success.

A voice was heard in the gallery calling for Charlie Wilson. It was Alfred Greenwood who started the call, and Arthur Richards took it up bravely, till there was quite a loud demand for Charlie.

Mr. Wilson was sent in search of his son, and found him serving out coffee behind the bar, for he was so overcome with emotion that he could not remain any longer in the hall.

"Come along, Charlie," said Mr. Andrews kindly—"come and make your first speech."

Charlie came forward, but it was only to burst into tears. He was not the only one thus affected; Mr. Wilson and several on the platform were touched in the same way.

"Never mind, Charlie," said Mr. Andrews; "pluck up courage, boy, and speak out just what you think. Speak out straight from the heart, and don't be afraid."

Charlie soon mastered his emotion, for he wanted to speak. He remembered his prophecy, if every

one else had forgotten it, and especially did he want to please Mr. Andrews.

Pushing aside his curly locks, and standing up stiffly, he said,—

“You have asked me to speak, but I don’t know what to say. I thank Mr. Richards for saving me from death, and you, Mr. Andrews, for all your love and kindness to me and my family. I believe, sir, from my short experience, that intoxicating drinks are a great curse to many, and that total abstinence is a blessing to all. I mean to practise it as long as I live. I hope, sir, that this institution will prove a blessing to thousands. That’s all I have to say.”

There were thunders of applause as Charlie sat down. He was so happy that his prophecy had come true; and so have many hundreds been since that day, who have found a new life within the walls of the building thus happily inaugurated.

THE END.

